HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS '45 SOCIETY

JOURNAL

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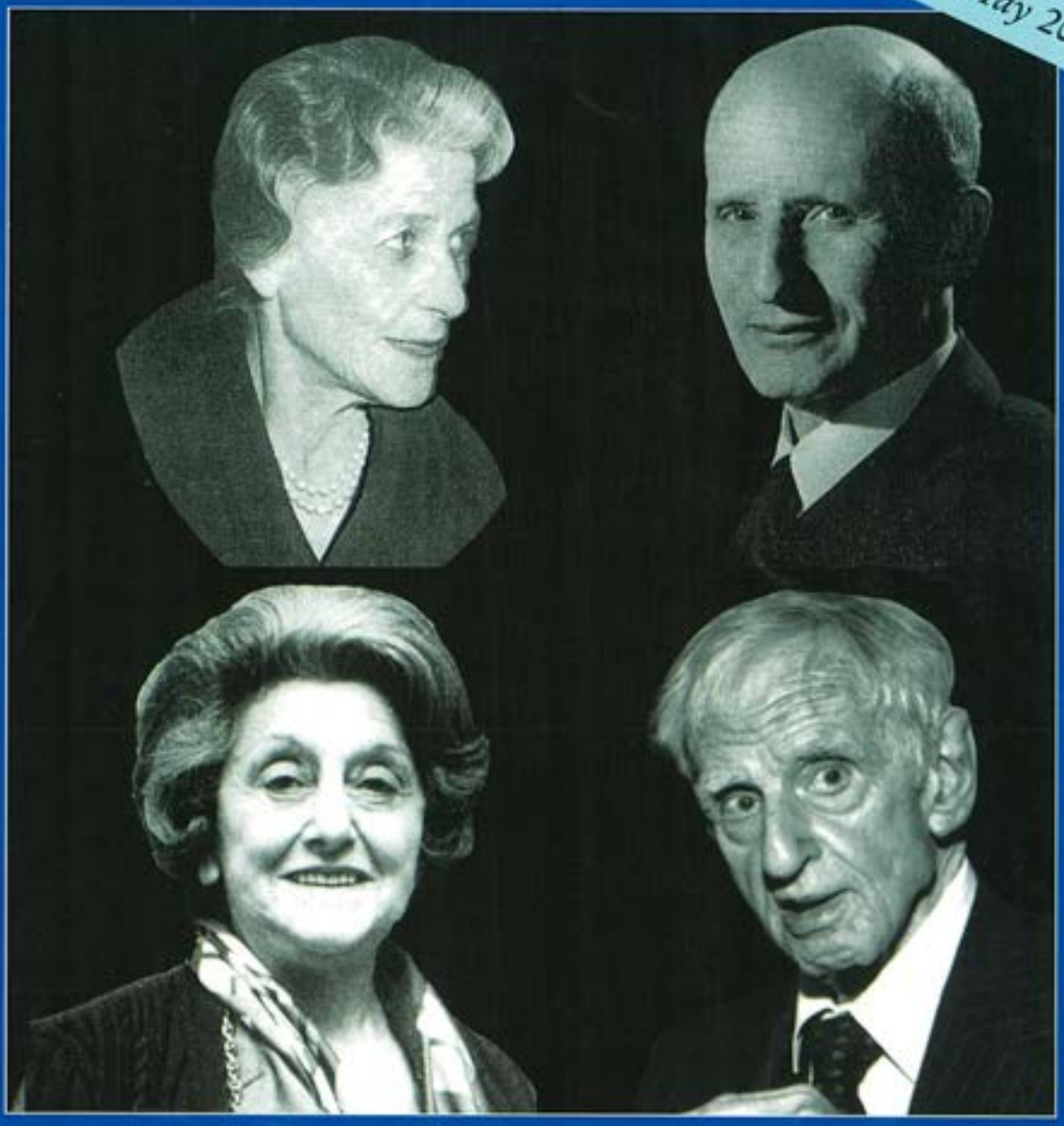

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR LIBERATION

1945-2005

(see page 6 Chairman's Comments)

THE '45 AID SOCIETY (HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS)

JOURNAL OF THE '45 AID SOCIETY
EDITOR
BEN HELFGOTT

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President's Message

Sir Martin Gilbert

Today marks the sixtieth anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and the final liberation of the camps. Each one of you has your own memories of that day; and of those terrible days and nights as the war was coming to an end, and your own survival hung on a slender thread.

Your sixtieth anniversary reunion marks a moment of triumph not only in your story, but in the story of the Jewish people, and of the wider humanity. Evil had done great harm, destroyed vast populations, uprooted a vibrant culture, but in the last resort, it was that very evil that was brought to an end. Hitler's Third Reich, which was to have lasted, according to its own declarations, for a thousand years, was in ruins and ashes after a mere twelve years.

Tragically, those twelve years were enough for the destructive anti-Jewish theme of Nazism to wreak a terrible havoc and slaughter. But you survived, and the Jewish people survived. It will take many years until the gap left by the six million who were murdered is filled by new life and new generations, but that process of recreation is continuous.

Your own children and grandchildren, many of whom are with us for the sixtieth anniversary reunion, are the living proof that the designs of Amalek, Haman, and Chmielnicki, as well as of the Nazis, did not succeed. We are alive as a people and as a civilisation.

Each Purim we remember the victory over our adversaries. And each May we celebrate your liberation, while at the same time remembering the fate of your families and friends, your communities and towns. The memories you hold of them are a precious legacy.

CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS

Ben Helfgott M.B.E.

In this 60th anniversary of our liberation it is appropriate to highlight in this commemorative special issue our arrival in England and our recuperation and rehabilitation, life in the hostels, The Primrose Jewish Youth Club, The '45 Aid Society and our integration into the community. A sizeable number of the articles have been selected from the Journals of our Society which were published since April 1976 and from other material previously published. Other articles were specially written by our members, some are reflective and some describe their careers. These articles are a tribute to the resilience of human nature that in spite of our traumatic suffering we managed to lead a normal life, integrate into society and play an active and creative part in the community. We could not have achieved this without the help extended to us by many remarkable people when first we were brought to this country.

On the cover of this commemorative issue are the pictures of the late Elaine Blond, the late Leonard G Montefiore, the late Oscar Joseph, and the late Lola Hahn Warburg, to whom we are deeply indebted, as indeed we are to many others.

Elaine Blond always referred to us endearingly as "her boys". In 1987, we honoured her by donating £5,000 for the purchase of sports equipment to be used by Felusha children at a Jerusalem school which was named after her.

In 1976, we established the Annual Leonard G Montefiore Memorial Lecture. Leonard Montefiore took a special interest in many of "our boys" in the hour of their need.

Oscar Joseph was the President of our Society from its inception in 1963 and continued to take a paternal interest in our affairs until his death in 1989. In 1979, we established the Annual Oscar Joseph Holocaust Award, which continues till today. We also donated, in 1987, £5,000 to the Wiener Library to help inaugurate an Audio-Visual Centre which was to bear his name.

Lola Hahn-Warburg also took a personal interest in "the boys" and after attending the 30th anniversary of our liberation, in a letter of thanks, wrote "I was moved by the spirit of brotherhood and feel deeply your dedication and your deep gratitude that a miracle saved you all. Coming home last night I looked through your brochure and read all the tributes and felt that when I cast my mind back over those thirty years, it was that noble personality of Leonard Montefiore and Oscar Friedman with whom I worked so closely, who guided you all. I feel so often in life when you give you receive. Last night, the few of us who there thirty years ago received in abundance".

How much they would have relished this evening had they been here tonight with us and meeting our grown-up children of whom we are so proud not only because of their success but because the kind of people they are, imbued with a sense of justice and deep responsibility to their fellow man.

It is the establishment of the '45 Aid Society that held us together and provided us with the opportunity to continue as a cohesive group. This is borne out in many of the pages of this issue. The '45 Aid Society has also given us a public profile, a collective voice and evinced to the community at large how we came through our trauma with dignity and independence. In addition to our members in England, we keep in touch with those who live abroad, in Israel, U.S.A., Canada and in other parts of the world and we offer help whether material or moral to our members in times of need and represent them at committee level in all organisations concerned with their welfare.

In spite of the fact that we have diligently pursued our careers, we have always been conscious of our responsibility to preserve the memory of those who perished in the Shoa. It is with pride that I recall that our Society has been active for many years in promoting Holocaust education and remembrance long before other institutions now dealing with these matters came into being. We encouraged young people to participate in Holocaust essay competitions. In 1978, we helped to establish the Holocaust Fellowship at the Oxford Postgraduate Jewish Studies. In 1981, many of our members gave talks to groups of schoolchildren at the East End Auschwitz Exhibition as, indeed, they have done at schools, universities and other public forum for many years and continue to do. We promoted books and exhibitions as well as organised public lectures on subjects relating to the Holocaust.

We are particularly proud to have commissioned a new Sefer Torah in remembrance of our murdered parents. This Sefer Torah, of which the Scribe was the son of one of our "boys", is housed at the Borehamwood, Elstree and Radlett Synagogue, where we have dedicated plaques commemorating the names of our parents.

Our members have achieved success in most spheres of economic and social activity but our great source of pride and joy are our children. They have received higher education and many of them are in the profession, academia, technology, finance, journalism, management, business and commerce and other fields. NOW our grandchildren too are following in their footsteps.

Looking back over the past sixty years, we can say with gratitude that Britain has been good to us; it gave us the opportunity to integrate and to develop our potential in spite of our handicaps. We, in turn, can be proud of the fact that we have made a positive contribution to the Jewish community and to society at large.

However, we cannot escape the fact that we still grieve the loss of six million souls murdered for no reason other than the fact that they were Jews. The world will never know what great contribution they may have made to civilisation.

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

THE PRIME MINISTER

10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

I warmly welcome the publication of this journal to mark the 60th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps and I am deeply grateful for this opportunity to salute the survivors who have displayed such strength and courage in the face of the almost unimaginable evil of the Holocaust.

An evil which sought to deny any respect to the living or the dead; which inflicted equal cruelties on age and youth; which deprived children of any experience of childhood; and which tore apart the most sacred family ties. I know that many survivors will have lost their entire families. Many will have witnessed the terrifying brutality which led to the death of their loved ones. Others will have had to wrestle with the fact that members of their families met an unknown fate. Some will have struggled with a sense of guilt that it was they who survived while parents, brothers, sisters perished. And all will have had to live with loneliness and grief and the memory of having been caught up in unimaginable barbarity.

Yet despite this, and it should never be underestimated, survivors of the Holocaust have borne their suffering with dignity and resilience. They have rebuilt their lives, comforted one another and contributed to the greater common good. In this country, we have been immeasurably enriched by survivors who made their homes here, and who have raised families, pursued careers, and contributed to their communities. But we have also been enriched through their eloquent witness in the face of the most appalling tragedies and adversity, to the resilience and dignity of the human spirit.

Tony Blair

JULEK'S DREAM OF A BETTER FUTURE

By Julek Zylberger

(Reprinted from Journal No. 23, Autumn 1999, page 10)

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 Beness, 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 Lodz 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

Theresienstadt before leaving for England.

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 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

Theresienstadt Barracks 1945.

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 out 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.

They find Refuge in the Lake District
EUROPEAN CHILDREN FLOWN TO CROSBY

The writer of this article was the late Joseph Finkelstone, then a young reporter not much older than many of us were at the time. He later became Foreign Editor of The Jewish Chronicle and Honorary Member of our Society.

(Reproduced from the Carlisle Journal, August 17th 1945)

Learning English in Windermere.

Jewish children from concentration camps, convalescent homes, and the streets of towns in Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Germany have found a temporary home in the Cumberland Lake District. They have passed through horrors that can hardly be described. One of them, a boy of fifteen, actually fought in several battles and was awarded a medal.

The children were flown direct from the Continent to Crosby aerodrome near Carlisle, in ten RAF Stirlings, and they landed on Tuesday afternoon. There were 337 of them, one a stowaway, and as they stepped from the planes, clutching in their hands small suitcases, bundles and souvenirs, they

smiled at the prospect of their new life.

These little mites have known what it is to be separated from their parents, some of whom have been murdered in German concentration camps, and to wander the streets homeless and hungry.

Buses were ready for them and they were quickly taken to a hostel at Ambleside, which is to be their home for some time.

The children were accompanied by a few adults, an Unrra woman official and a British Army Captain who had rescued his wife from a concentration camp after being separated from her for six years.

A Stowaway

The preparations for the journey at Prague and at Crosby were thorough. Some weeks ago the children were medically examined and secluded to make sure that none of them were suffering from any disease. Precautions were taken to prevent any unauthorised person from joining the party, but the daring and resource of a Polish boy of 13½, Icek Korotnicki, overcame all obstacles.

While working in the Polish town of Czestochova he heard a rumour that there was going to be an evacuation of children to Britain from Prague, and arrived there four days before the children were due to leave.

He was told that he could not be taken, and officials heard nothing more of him until on the plane's arrival at Crosby it was discovered that he was amongst the passengers.

The boy was immediately put in a room by himself. When seen by a "Journal" reporter he was apparently oblivious of the stir he had caused and was quietly munching a piece of cake. He was later conveyed to an isolation hospital for observation.

Reception Organisation

The arrival of the fist plane late in the afternoon set in motion the carefully prepared reception organisation. As they stepped from the plane the children were taken to a hut on the aerodrome, where refreshments had been prepared for them under the supervision of Mrs Mark Fraser and Mrs Honeyman, Carlisle Women's Voluntary Services. Officials of the Central British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation were very helpful in sorting out the youngsters. A doctor examined them, and Customs officials from Liverpool inspected the luggage. Mr J E Etchells and Miss E S Thompson, Ministry of Health, were also present.

The children looked fit, and with a few exceptions, quite cheerful. Surprise was expressed at their good physique but the doctor said afterwards that most of them were anaemic.

There were many touching scenes as the children arrived. A little boy presented one of the women officials with a bouquet of beautiful roses which he had brought all the way from Prague.

Later in the evening another child presented a second bouquet. There were expressions of appreciation from RAF personnel when a boy arrived with a small Union Jack in his lapel.

Terrible Stories

Before leaving, the children readily told their stories, and never before in human history had anything so terrible been heard from the lips of young children. One boy said that when the Germans evacuated the inmates of a camp before the arrival of the Allies they shot anyone who could not walk fast enough. For seven weeks they got hardly any food and the children had to eat grass. He himself had eaten a snake. Another boy told proudly of his having been a Russian partisan.

An outing in the Lake District.

Perhaps the most remarkable story and one that fascinated all those present came from a boy of 15, who was dressed in a miniature United States Army uniform. He explained in hesitating English, that he was in Buchenwald when the Third American Army arrived and became attached to a tank destroyer company. An American captain became so interested in him that he took him to other fronts and the boy actually fought in several battles and was awarded a medal.

When the two, now close friends, had to separate, the officer gave the boy a letter addressed to the American authorities. In it he stated that when conditions permitted and the boy could go to the States he would guarantee his schooling and work.

Nobody present could fail to be affected by the sight of the orphaned toddlers sitting by themselves on the grass and quietly sipping milk. They quickly became the favourites of RAF officers.

Fifty years later, Joe Finkelstone wrote:-

A pivotal role in the transformation of the youngsters from traumatised camp survivors into well-adjusted British citizens was played by the specially established London youth club, named the Primrose after the local telephone dialling code.

Under the guidance of the club leader, Yogi Mayer, an athlete talented enough to

represent Germany if the Nazis had not intervened, the youngsters found the communal home they urgently needed.

They could eat there after work and they could find the sporting facilities they craved for.

It was at the Primrose that Ben Helfgott could display the first inklings of his sporting talents which were to lead him - uniquely for a death camp survivor - to become the British light-weight weightlifting champion and record-holder and represent his new country in the Olympic Games in Rome and Melbourne.

An even greater hunger than for good food and sport burnt in them - that for education.

Ben Helfgott sums up this feeling. "For years we had been deprived of the chance to study. Now we wanted to make up for lost time. We literally swallowed education." Those with special talents even became university dons. Kurt Klappholz became a Reader at the London School of Economics. Jerzy Herszberg, a Reader in mathematics at Birkbeck College. Witold Gutt obtained a doctorate in chemistry and a senior place in the civil service. Roman Halter won distinction as an artist and architect.

Their ranks also produced spiritual leaders, notably Rabbi Hugo Gryn of the West London Synagogue, who regularly agonises in the BBC's Moral Maze debates.

Speaking of their transformation into proud Londoners and Mancunians, "the boys" and "the girls", as they are still known despite having themselves become grandparents, make clear one crucial point.

Repeatedly they told me: "We survived because we wanted to tell the world the terrible story of Nazi murders. We wanted to help ensure that no such hell could ever happen again."

Yet they added: "When we emerged from the Nazi hell, we never thought of revenge. We retained our faith in humanity, a faith confirmed by our experiences in England."

Now, the once destitute "boys" and "girls" are raising, through their '45 Aid Society, considerable sums of money for worthy charities.

Having heard from their President - historian, Sir Martin Gilbert, author of the massive biography of Winston Churchill - of their endeavours, Princes Charles and John Major have voiced their admiration.

"Courage, fortitude, resilience" are precisely the words which one would want to associate with the youngsters who arrived in Carlisle 50 years ago.

CHILDREN FROM THE CAMPS

Joan Stiebel

(Reprinted from Journal, 19th December 1995, page 3)

Joan was Executive Director of the CBF, now World Jewish Relief, at the time of our arrival in England.

Soon after the end of the war, the Jewish Refugees Committee and the Friends Committee for Refugees and Aliens asked the Home Office for permission to bring over some of the orphaned children who had been in concentration camps. The Home Office gave their consent for up to 1,000 under the age of 16 to come to this country and the scene was set for the operation to begin.

Through the Home Office, a largely disused Ministry of Production housing site on Lake Windermere was made available for the accommodation of the first group and we set about equipping it, whilst the selection of suitable children went ahead in Europe.

The first children came from Theresienstadt in Czechoslovakia and numbered 300. It was anticipated that many would require medical treatment and the preparation of a suitable sick-bay was considered of great importance.

The arrangements for the transport of the children was put in hand and the Royal Air Force provided Sterling bombers for the purpose. Then the weather took a hand and for five days it was not suitable for the evacuation exercise to take place.

In the meantime, a special committee - The Committee for the Care of Children from the Camps - was set up in Bloomsbury House, with Mr Leonard Montefiore as its Chairman. It also included Mrs Neville Blond and Mrs Lola Hahn-Warburg, both of whom, with Mr Montefiore, were extremely active throughout. On the administrative side, I was the professional most involved, whilst Mr Oscar Friedman, a psychology social worker, was in overall charge of the care and welfare of the children.

It was decided that Mr Montefiore and I should meet the first group who were to come in at Crosby-in-Eden, an airfield near Carlisle. Sleepers

on the trains were in short supply, but the Home Office arranged them for some categories of traveller, including those connected with the refugee organisations. I booked sleepers for four days in a row and always had to cancel them because the planes could not fly. On the fifth day, I did no booking, the weather cleared and Mr Montefiore and I had a crowded and, in a way, amusing journey sitting up in a very over-crowded train.

We arrived at Carlisle at six o'clock in the morning and immediately contacted the RAMC who were providing trucks to transport the children from the airport to Windermere. We then managed to get a bath and breakfast in one of the hotels prior to going to Marks and Spencer, when it opened, to see the Manager. Through Mrs Blond, he had taken charge of all the local arrangements and was a tower of strength.

Eventually, we had lunch with him in the store and then drove out to Crosby-in-Eden. Immigration officers and MI5 representatives were there, as were the press. An amusing aside in what turned out to be a very long day was when one of the press asked Mr Montefiore what he did, and he replied,

"I am one of those awful beings known as a rentier"!

Once at the airfield, all we had to do was to wait for the first plane to come into sight. When it did, I can still remember the choked feeling I had that it was all happening but, once the aircraft landed, followed by the rest, there was no time for contemplation.

Mr Montefiore went down to the landing area and I stayed at the airport building to deal with whatever came up. Some time during that hectic afternoon, there was a call from one of the MI5 men:

"Miss Stiebel, come - we've got a stowaway."

I am not sure if it was ever discovered how the boy, known as Ivan, got onto the plane. Each plane had two adult escorts, in addition to the children, and there was a nominal roll of everyone on board, but nobody admitted having seen Ivan and he was clearly not a spy.

When they arrived, the children were not in very good shape. The plane had come down en route and the travellers had been plied with chocolate and oranges - not a good combination in rather choppy flying conditions!

By the time all the planes had landed and we had dealt with the formalities, it was quite late and we still had the drive to Windermere.

Some time during the drive, we heard that the Japanese had surrendered and that peace had come at last.

We reached Windermere in the early hours of the morning where staff and some voluntary workers awaited us.

The children were in amazingly good spirits and Mr Montefiore used to tell a story which indicated their joy at being in a free country. The truck he was in broke down en route and he apologised to his group for the delay. One boy said:

"Don't apologise. It is an honour to break down on a British road."

Surely that said it all.

The next day must have been a strange one for them all. There was so much that had to be done: Medical examinations, clothing distribution, acclimatisation to such a new environment and much more. One thing that stands out in my mind is the first main meal with the children. Some of them emerged from it, their new jerseys bulging. Believing that there might not always be food, they had taken bread as a stand-by.

There were still some locals living on the Estate and they were very interested in our group and did everything they could to help them, amongst other things, loaning them bicycles. We were lucky in that we had genuinely concerned volunteers from nearby places as well as some Londoners who were holidaying in the vicinity, notably the late Mrs Anna Schwab, a former member of the Jewish Refugees Committee. She helped in many ways, especially on the domestic front.

Whilst I was involved in everything during my brief stay in Windermere, mine was an administrative job and the actual planning for the children's future lay with Mr Oscar Friedman.

I also went with Mr Montefiore to meet the second group which came to Southampton. The contrast between the two reception places could not have been greater because the first was specially erected for the Ministry of Production during the war and Southampton was a beautiful old house lent for the purpose by its owner.

Although Mr Oscar Friedman continued in overall charge of the whole group, Mr Fritz Friedman ran Southampton and looked after the group who were housed there.

Recollections of the arrival of the Windermere Group

Alice Goldberger

(Reprinted from Journal No. 2, September 1976, page 20)

Alice Goldberger was a close collaborator of the late Oskar Friedmann and looked after the youngest members of the Windermere Group at Lingfield House.

Again we celebrated the reunion of our liberation, and again one met good-looking, mature men and women, well-dressed, happy and surrounded by their children.

31 years..... and I remembered waiting at the airport near the Lake District for the first aeroplane to land. I had been sent by Mr O Friedmann, and next to me, lying in the grass, waiting, was a thoughtful, quiet gentleman, Mr Leonard Montefiore. We did not speak, but we wondered what kind of youngsters would appear, what language they would speak and how they would react.

At last, after many hours waiting, the 'planes landed, and the first group of grey-faced little men, dressed in oddly collected clothing, appeared. They had photographs in their hands and asked "Do you know what they have done to us?" The second question was "Is there a school where we can go to?" And when I asked "Do you want to go to school?" they all shouted, "Of course, we have not been allowed to learn anything".

When we finally arrived at the Reception Centre "Troutbeck Bridge", the youngsters had to leave their clothing to be disinfected, (since the place they had come from was thought to be infected with Typhoid) and they were asked not to leave their houses until new clothing would be provided for them. However, the following morning one saw a group of young men in long white underpants, dictionaries in their hands, asking the friendly villagers, who looked a them with some curiosity, "BICYCLES?" They all wanted to ride and move about, and soon one saw these funny looking boys on bicycles in the village streets.

The youngest children were terrified when the people from Windermere greeted them at the bus-stops, for since it was already dark when they arrived, the people carried torches to greet these young strangers. The children were frightened, they had seen people with torches shouting and threatening them, and not greeting them happily, as they were greeting them now. But could a four year old know the difference?

Later on, when we were already in our beautiful house in Lingfield, one young boy suddenly walked with heavy steps and talking in a gruff voice like a man. I understood when I heard him slaying to another child, "Children have mothers, I have not got one, so I have to be a grown-up now".

Another boy, 7 years old, asked every visitor, "Are you married? Have you children?" And when the answer was "no", he said reproachfully, "You should have children, a lot of children, and never go away from them."

When the children were able to talk and express their feelings, one girl told me how everything was so much better at home, "even our pudding was pinker". While the older boys and girls had true memories of their families and their experiences, the young children could hardly remember anything and had to make up stories of their home.

That was the beginning.

Now these young children have grown up, have families of their own and are good and loving parents. Some live in Israel, some in the USA, one family with four children lives in Australia and the rest have made their homes in England.

All of them have remained in close contact with each other and with me.

Arrival in Crosby-on-Eden.

THE YOUNGEST HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS

Manna Friedmann

Manna worked very closely with Alice Goldberger, looking after the lingfield children and continues to be very close to them.

"Where'er we shall wander in lands far asunder we shall remember that lovely ash grove."

• Weir Courtney, Lingfield, Surrey

Weir Courtney became the happy childhood home for the Lingfield children, as do all our memories connecting us to our homes. For them the other children and Alice Goldberger became their family. The West London Synagogue was generous in funding Alice's shopping "feats" for the children - clothing, toys, games, art materials, pets, and goodies. The monthly meetings with the Committee Ladies gave Alice migraine attacks - and the West London Synagogue continued to pay.

The "Aunties", members of the West London Synagogue, were also generous. They visited Weir Courtney, took the children out and invited them to their homes, eager to show them how much they cared. So the children experienced two worlds: Weir Courtney, where Sophie cooked the tasty meals which they enjoyed, and the homes of the "Aunties". The children were happy to return to Weir Courtney. They never wanted to stay away overnight. This confirmed Alice's conviction to keep the children in Weir Courtney as long as possible, as opposed to the idea of Oscar Friedmann (consultant of the Committee of Care of Children from the Camps), namely, to have them adopted as early as possible.

We must not forget that Weir Courtney became home for Alice and the caretakers, myself included. It seemed like some fairy-like godmother was behind this paradise-like existence - the gardens of Sir Benjamin, the swimming pool, the music room with the grand piano, the walk to the village school through the woods, where bluebells and daffodils grew, where the teachers were kind, yet expected discipline and appropriate behaviour.

"Home" was the place where one could relax, have temper tantrums, and where adults were able to deal with crises in a benign manner.

Memories of the past - the separations, the liberation from the camps, the journey to Windermere on the military aircraft, the Reception Centre where Alice and Oscar Friedmann had been waiting for their arrival, and then the ride to Lingfield Surrey Weir Courtney, were very much in the background.

Birthdays were celebrated, presents carefully chosen for each child, Friday evening and each Jewish festival celebrated - this was paradise. Who would want to leave and go to some "Auntie's" house without the other children, "the siblings," "the family"?

This was a wonderful short-term solution, but what about long term planning? These child survivors were among the remnant of European Jews. Now that rehabilitation had begun, further education had to be considered and planned. The Care Committee in London was hard at work. The creation of the State of Israel had finally been realised, and three years in Weir Courtney had passed. The move to London was inevitable.

• "Lingfield House", Isleworth, London

A house in Isleworth was found at 42 The Grove. Paid for by another fairy godmother?

The children had mastered a great deal, including English. Now at the average age of ten, with little schooling experience in early life, the opportunities for some were limited. A few were fortunate to achieve higher level education. All became integrated into the local school system, their social life expanded, and Jewish education was provided in London.

• 159 West End Lane, London

An apartment was found for Alice and Sophie and a few of the girls moved in with them, while looking for appropriate accommodation (private or a hostel).

This apartment remained the "home base" for all the children, and soon THEIR CHILDREN. Thus the extended family remained in touch with each other during Alice's lifetime.

In 1978 Alice became a national celebrity. Thames Television celebrated her 80th birthday in their nationally televised programme "This is Your Life". This occasion brought "the Family" together from all parts of the world. (After this event, Alice was offered free rides on the London Underground and by taxi drivers). Alice died in 1986. In 1997, we celebrated her 100th birthday in London. Again, the "family" came together from all over the world.

One of the "children", Zdenka, born in Czechoslovakia, who came to Weir Courtney via Theresienstadt and Windermere, had assumed the role of a trusted link connecting "the family". She resides in London and continues to be that link. Thank you Zdenka.

Of the twenty-four children who originally came to Weir Courtney, plus five other who joined later:

- 8 were adopted
- 2 were reunited with their Italian family
- 1 boy reunited with his Austrian mother
- 6 emigrated to Israel
- Other emigrated to the U.S., Canada and Australia
- The rest remained in England.

THE GAMES MASTER

(This article about the late George Lawrence is reprinted from our Journal, 19th December 1995, page 7)

When 82-year-old George Lawrence opened his Evening Standard on Monday, he got one of the biggest surprises of his long life.

"I could hardly believe my eyes", he said. "There in front of me were photographs of boys and girls I taught games fifty years ago. And there was the exciting story of their arrival in this country of the youngsters who had amazingly survived the Nazi death camps in Europe."

As he looked at the photographs, George Lawrence's excitement rose. He thought that he recognised quite a few of them. They had become his enthusiastic pupils. For fifty years he has kept the photographs he had taken of some of the "boys". Now he could compare them with those published in the Evening Standard as they stood at the window of one of the R.A.F. planes bringing them from the former Nazi camp at Theresienstadt to Carlisle on August 14, 1945. From there they were sent for recuperation to the Lake District and it was there that George Lawrence first met them.

"I happened to live at Troutbeck Bridge on the shores of Lake Windermere when the boys arrived there", he recalled. "I applied and got the job of games master and spent many happy hours in their company. It gave me a great feeling to read about them again."

His photographs of the boys are very revealing. Although now enjoying the beautiful and serene surroundings of Lake Windermere, the scars of their terrible experiences in the Nazi death camps are still visible on their faces and in their stance. Their eyes look out as if from a different, harsher world. After a meal, some of them emerged from the dining hall with bulging pullovers. They had to be persuaded that they need not hide food as there would be enough for the next meal.

On the backs of the photographs, the boys wrote greetings to Mr Lawrence. At first, the greetings were in Polish, as nearly all of them were born in Poland. Within months, however, the boys were writing the greetings in English.

"For my teacher - Gershon Frydman". "One of your pupils - Jasbek, from Poland, Krakow".

"I did not know what language they spoke, whether it was Polish, Yiddish, German, but we got on famously", George Lawrence said. "The boys loved sport and competed with immense enthusiasm".

This enthusiasm could even be excessive, as one of their club leaders at the Primrose Youth Club, Yogi Mayer, later found. When he rebuked one boy for fighting after a football match, he replied:

"I have lost so much that I cannot keep on losing".

For fifty years, George Lawrence, who now lives in Roehampton, has cherished the photographs of the boys. Some

Mr Lawrence with one of the football teams

of the inscriptions have already faded, but his memories of the "boys" are still sharp. Now he is eager to meet them. One of them he will not see. The "boy" who saw his father shot dead by the Nazis, himself died a couple of years ago. But the others, now grandparents, are just as eager to meet him. A reunion is being arranged by Ben Helfgott, Chairman of the '45 Aid Society, which represents all the boys and girls who came to Britain 50 years ago. The "boys" believe they owe a great deal to games master, George Lawrence, as they successfully struggled to start a fruitful new life in London and elsewhere, becoming doctors, dentists, university lecturers, manufacturers and, in one case, a champion bridge player. Learning to play the game, they became well-adjusted British citizens in abundance, the love, freedom and opportunities they found in their adoptive country.

The Football Team.

A reporter at large
A QUIET LIFE IN HAMPSHIRE

This article was written by Mollie Panter-Downes and appeared in the New Yorker on March 2nd 1946 soon after the second group of the `Boys' arrived in England

The British government has up to now brought between four and five hundred Jewish children from the Nazi concentration camps over to England. The children are, as far as is known, mostly orphans between nine and sixteen; checking on ages has been difficult, since the youngsters have no papers and nothing more definite than a few hazy scraps of family history to help trace any relatives who may still be living. Bloomsbury House, in London, the headquarters of the Jewish Refugee Committee, made all arrangements for the children's journey - the R.A.F. brought them to England by air - to reception hostels at Windermere, in the Lake District, and at Durley, in Hampshire, and from there to smaller hostels in Manchester, Oxford, and elsewhere. One morning recently I went down to visit the hostel at Durley, a tiny hamlet in a part of Hampshire where you see nothing much but quiet, brown fields, an occasional thatched cottage, and a lot of windy sky. Wintershill Hall, where this particular hostel has been set up, is a large, rather gloomy-looking Georgian mansion whose conventional pattern of park, formal gardens, and greenhouses has been somewhat altered by a block of Army huts. A Star of David was chalked on a pillar of the portico, where an electric bell, its push button missing, invited one to *klinge*. Before I could do so, the door was opened by a young man in spectacles, who wore a beret and a dark blue lumberjacket, on one sleeve of which the Star was indistinctly chalked. I entered a hall decorated only with multicolored paper chains - I just had time to notice a lot of children milling about in the background - and he led me into the office of Dr Friedman, the head of the hostel, and his organizing secretary, Mrs Katz.

Dr Friedman is an eager, thickset, red-headed man with humorous eyes and the vitality of the successful youth leader. He got out of Germany himself four months before the war started, and has since been a professor of languages and history at a university in the Midlands. He speaks excellent, lively English, and his pronunciation is perfect except for an occasional confusion of the letters "v" and "w". The first group of children arrived at Wintershill Hall five weeks before, he said; there were a hundred and fifty-two, the majority of them Polish. Now there were just half that number. Most of the others had been sent to other hostels or to hospitals for medical treatment, and a few were living with recently discovered relatives. Ever since it had been announced that the children were coming, Bloomsbury House had been besieged by anxious callers, come to scan the lists of each fresh party of arrivals for the name of the Polish niece, the German grandson, the Czech cousin who had disappeared behind the iron curtain in 1939. Sixteen children had been reunited with relatives in the London area, and a few fathers who had gone to America before the Nazis took over in their home towns had turned up, wearing American uniforms, to collect what was left of their families. Usually it wasn't much. Dr Friedman said that the children were mostly eleven or older, and there were far fewer girls than boys - only twenty-eight girls out of the hundred and fifty-two children at Wintershill Hall. "The young ones and the girls died more easily," said Dr Friedman simply.

I asked what would happen to the children who did not find relatives or were not adopted, and Dr Friedman said that at the moment this was hard to answer. The British authorities had let them all in on a two-year-visa permit, provided they would agree not to take any jobs. The older ones would, however, be permitted to receive some sort of vocational training. The Australian Jewish community was willing to take a large number of children, but transportation for them was not yet obtainable. It was hoped that eventually most of the homeless children would be allowed to go in a group to Palestine, a hope which the present difficulties of that troubled land have not exactly simplified. "It is what the children themselves wish, naturally," Dr Friedman said. "While they were in Germany, Palestine appeared indeed a promised land. Some of them feel very bitter toward the British about it, though they will possibly change their minds when they have been here a while and have heard all sides of the question. But what appeals to them most

is the idea that in Palestine they would all be together. They dread being parted from each other. Children who have been together in Belsen and Buchenwald, who have lost parents and relatives, cling pathetically to that shared experience because it is all the background they possess in the world." Dr Friedman's face brightened. "But in spite of all they have gone through," he went on, "these children have managed to retain their will to survive. They are anxious to succeed, they are hungry to learn. And they have no sense of being under obligation to anyone. No, the very reverse! They feel that it is up to society to make the best deal it can for them. People say to me, `But in this house, in this lovely country - for these children to come here from Belsen and Terazin and so on must be *heaven!*'" Dr Friedman flung up his hands and laughed delightedly. "Not in the least! They are highly critical! When we give them a coat, they will touch the cloth and say, `Terribly poor quality.' or they may criticize the cut. It is not lack of gratitude, it is that they worry about their futures, you understand. How they look is extremely important to them. They are anxious, passionately anxious, to look well. The boys carry little combs in their pockets and comb their hair all the time. They do not want to be set apart from the rest of the world by what they have gone through. No, already they feel that they are individuals. You can understand why it is our aim to encourage that feeling."

The health of the children, Dr Friedman said, has been on the whole surprisingly good. The months of proper food since their liberation have worked a considerable change. "There was much tuberculosis, as you can imagine," he said, "but it was checked by all the affected children being immediately removed for treatment. For the rest, there were skin complaints, such as scabies, and a general low resistance to any small infection. The most noticeable defect was their teeth. Terrible! We have a dentist coming here twice a week, working as hard as he can, but he does not know how to get through all the jobs."

"None of the big boys - there are a few older ones - have started to shave, either," said Mrs Katz, a calm and pretty woman. "I suppose that's a sign of weakness. And when they get excited over anything, or exert themselves at all, the sweat literally pours down their faces." The telephone rang, and she got up and began an earnest conversation with what was obviously the village plumber about a jammed lavatory in one of the boys' dormitories.

"Emotionally, yes - that is where I would say they show their history," said Dr Friedman to me. "There is no delinquency among them. Their terrible sufferings have not made them vicious, as might have happened. For instance, one child here was thrown by the Nazis on a heap of bodies waiting to be burned. When the British arrived, they found him still alive, though unconscious. Another boy saw Kramer take a baby by the foot, throw it in the air, and bang! with his revolver. Pleasant things to remember in your childhood! But when they arrived here, we were surprised at their control, their willingness. For remember, they couldn't be sure that any new grown-up wasn't someone to be feared, who could torture and make life hideous if he chose. At first they couldn't get used to the idea that there would always be enough food for all at regular hours. It was one of the Nazis' ideas of humour to break up bits of stale bread occasionally and throw it among these starving little wolves just to see them fight for it. So when our meal bell rang there was a rush, a mad stampede. I have seen boys jump clean over tables in their anxiety to get there first and grab the food before the others. When they understood, after a few days, that each had his *own* chair, his *own* share of food, which was to be respected by the others, they were perfectly reasonable. But their emotions are still strong. They are up in the air one moment, down the next. Suddenly it will come over a child: I have no father or mother, I am alone, I do not know what will happen to me. And of course they are terribly restless. They would like a cinema each night, each day something new to happen. Imagine the life of violent, terrible happenings to which they were accustomed! Some, you know, were in hiding in the ghettos, down in the sewers, and were accustomed to jumping trains, to dodging S.S. guards on the frontier. And then the dreadful things all the time in the camps - shootings, beatings, cremations. Here in Hampshire it seems quiet after that. So they are mad for movement - bicycles. If I could get them some, I would, but it is difficult. What they suffer from is the old refugee malady of moving on, moving somewhere. It's easy to understand."

Dr Friedman paused and offered me a cigarette. I asked if the children were allowed to go outside the grounds. He said that they certainly were. They go down to the village when they want to do a bit of shopping or see a movie. Each child is given three shillings a week pocket money, which he can spend as he wants; many, said the Doctor proudly, had started little savings-bank accounts. (The whole scheme, I learned, is being financed by the Central

British Fund for Jewish Relief and Rehabilitation, which appealed for help to the Jews of England.) Twice a week the village boys come up and there are what Dr Friedman called "the sport" - football games on the muddy playing field, between the Durley lads and the lads of Belsen, Buchenwald, and places east. Both sides apparently enjoy themselves. "In the afternoons there are handicrafts, too," Dr Friedman said. "Such work is valuable for calming the mind. Or we may have an informal discussion group on current affairs. You might hear one later. But our real work is in the morning. We have three periods: one English, one Hebrew, and the third on Palestinography - history and government, civic affairs, and so on. No boy or girl is forced to attend classes, but they are encouraged and persuaded by us to do so. And most of them have a thirst for learning; they wish to soak it up as fast as we can give it to them. Some find that they cannot keep up with the brighter ones, and then they have a tendency to stop trying, to give up all hope immediately. The habit of hope is still so new to them. In those cases, we have to coax them until their confidence in themselves slowly, slowly emerges."

Mrs Katz, who had settled things with the plumber, now rejoined the conversation. She said that she thought lack of confidence in anything or anybody was the chief mark left by the concentration camps. "Even though they like us now - perhaps they even love us - they still don't trust us completely," she said. "If you tell one to do something, you see him wondering what your motive is in telling him to do that. They don't trust humanity yet, and they have no idea of sharing or of the communal spirit, either. When it came to handing out clothing outfits, a boy would immediately be bitterly jealous and resentful if another boy got a pull-over or boots of a better quality. Even if it was his best friend, it made no difference. Because we guessed this would happen, we were very anxious to get all the children outfits exactly alike. But this turned out to be impossible; with clothing terribly short, we had to take what we could get. Even our determination not to give them any second-hand things failed. All their lives they had worn old, castoff rags, and it would have been so wonderful psychologically to start them out with a brand-new outfit that was theirs alone. Sad to say, we just couldn't manage it."

Dr Friedman said that the children had been astonished and horrified to hear that the English had a tight rationing of clothing and food. "When they talked in the camps, England always appeared as the golden land, the land of plenty," he said. "Now the boys say, 'Why, the *Germans* were better off than that!' I took them to see the bomb damage in Southampton one day and they could not get over that, either. They had not known that England had been so badly knocked about." He jumped up, tapped on the window, and called in German to two boys who were passing outside. "They are from Belsen, and I have told them to come in and meet you," he said, sitting down again. "You know, it's funny, the English press has called all these children who have come over here Belsen children, but many have never been to that camp. Belsen and Buchenwald have taken all the limelight, but there were others far worse, far more horrible, which no one seems to know about. Many of our boys have been in four or five camps, and if you ask them, they say Treblinka, in Poland, was the worst. They had a song about Treblinka which they used to sing in all the camps. It went from camp to camp, and even down into the ghettos where the Jewish people lay hiding in the sewers, and it grew all the time as it went from mouth to mouth - like one of the old European folk songs, you know. I have a translation of it."

He was getting up to look for it when the two boys came in. One was small and swarthy, with lively black eyes and curly hair; the other was a taller, pin-faced boy with a shy, pleasant smile. They shook hands and said, "Hello, cheerio, thank you very much," all in one breath. Dr Friedman, coming back with the song, explained that the boys had picked up a bit of English since they had been liberated. He added that they were both about fifteen and had been in several camps before they fetched up in Belsen.

The translation of the song ran:

Not far from here, at the shunting yard,
The people are crowding round the cattle trucks.
The piteous cry of a child is heard calling to his mother,
"Don't leave me here alone. You will never come back again!"

For Treblinka is a grave for every Jew.
Whoever goes there remains there;
From there, there is no return....

My heart breaks
When I think of the good friends who there met a violent death.
My heart breaks
When I remember that there my brother and sisters perished.
My heart breaks
When I remember that there

my mother and father were murdered,
And I join the others at the shunting site,
Sobbing bitterly with them and crying,
"Don't leave me here alone!"

"You know that Treblinka song, don't you?" Dr Friedman asked the smaller boy. "Oh, sure, sure," the boy said matter-of-factly, as though he had been asked if he knew the latest swing number. "You often saw Kramer and the others at Belsen, Arthur?" Dr Friedman asked the older one. "Sure, sure," he said. "I was doing a painter's job, see, and I hear Kramer say to one of the S.S., `The British here very soon, so you got to get the place better, or else bad for me, see?' So we must quick paint the barracks, and Kramer tries to kill many more by the glass, so that when the British come, not so many Jews in camp, see?"

"Powdered glass," explained Dr Friedman, and the bigger boy, smiling gently, said, "In the soup - a small piece each day. In two, t'ree week, you dead for sure. Many, many have died by the glass."

"But then the British come," said Arthur. "They come on April fifteen." The boys looked at each other, laughed, and changed together, "T'ree p.m.!"

"And they made the Nazis bury all the bodies they had not had time to burn," said Arthur. "Look! I show you!" He pulled out of his pocket a little diary and flicked the pages, in which, he showed me, he had methodically noted, "April 22nd, 1,000 [bodies buried]," "April 23rd, 5,000," "April 24th, 5,000," and so on. In the middle of these entries was a normal, childish memo, in large, straggling capital letters: "MY BIRTHDAY."

"There goes the dinner bell," said Dr Friedman. "Off you go." Arthur, who had plainly been warming to his subject, looked disappointed, but he and his companion obeyed promptly. As we followed them, Dr Friedman said, "They don't speak of such things to each other. It's only when there is someone new who they think is interested. Among themselves, they discuss the work, the sport, the future - they worry much about the future -but not the past."

As we went through the hall, I noticed that the handrail of the big, curving staircase was twisted around and around with cord. "To stop them sliding down and breaking their necks," Mrs Katz explained. In the dining room were five long tables, already lined with chattering children. Some grown-ups (teachers, I was told) were ladling out plates of soup at a side table. Nearly all the boys wore large cloth caps pulled down to their ears, which gave them a curiously Dead End Kid effect. A few wore black skullcaps or berets. "Orthodox Jews must be covered at table," explained Dr Friedman, as he fished a skullcap out of his pocket and placed it on his head.

At first glance, the children looked healthy enough, though some of them were small for their age, and skinny. But when I inspected them carefully, I got a disconcerting impression of something not quite right, like a drawing which is out of scale. A number of the older boys were big, strapping lads, but their weight seemed badly distributed. When I spoke of this, Mrs Katz said that a lot of the children had a queer, bloated look because of overeating after the years of starvation. "Some of the girls, in particular, are extremely odd shapes," she said. Their eyes weren't quite right, either, having an odd, remote, sardonic expression, as if they were always remembering, even though the rest of the children's bodies had accepted all the changes for the better since April, 1945. Everybody's table manners were excellent. I said as much to Mrs Katz, and she replied, "Not bad when you remember that they weren't used to knives or forks, or to sitting on chairs, or eating off anything but a filthy floor."

"They all smoke," said Dr Friedman deprecatingly. "Girls and boys, even the little ones. How can one stop them? After they were liberated, the soldiers paid them in cigarettes for doing odd jobs."

"If you suggest they cut down," Mrs Katz said, "they look at you and say, `You'd smoke all day too if you'd seen your mother and father burned,' and that is difficult to answer."

After the soup came a hearty helping of boiled beef and carrots and then some highly spiced pudding. When the children had finished, a young woman passed along the tables carrying a bowl of vitamin pills (the children are required to take them), and then the young man who had opened the door for me began to chant grace in a loud, high voice. This took some time, but the children loudly and with great gusto sang the responses. When grace was over, they got up and cheerfully clattered out of the room. "They have kept their religion," said Dr Friedman. "In the camps, the Nazis would make them do all sorts of forbidden jobs on the Sabbath day, but when the work was over, they would immediately say their prayers." He pointed out two posters, bearing Hebrew inscriptions in red, on the walls. He translated one as "From slavery to liberty," and the other as "A new light will shine upon Zion."

Dr Friedman said that he was

now going to hold one of the current-affairs discussions. While a group of children was being assembled, one of the boys came up to the Doctor and asked for a chit to the village barber, so that he could get a haircut. He was a big, blond, slow-moving, good-natured-looking fellow. Dr Friedman said that he was one of several hundred people who had been hastily evacuated by the Nazis from Dachau to a place in the Alps when the Americans got uncomfortably close, so that the camp would not have quite such a ghastly collection of emaciated humanity to give a bad impression to the liberators. Adults and children were loaded into cattle trucks, which were then nailed shut. They travelled four days without food or water. "Of the seventy in my truck, fifty were dead when we arrived," the boy said in German. With an innocent, happy smile, he recalled how the starving prisoners had raided the Alpine farms, killed cattle, and wolfed eggs and milk after the Nazis hastily decamped. "Many died immediately," he said, shrugging. "It's bad to eat so much when you are not used to eating." He laughed softly, as though remembering some childish indulgence at a Christmas party, and went off to get his hair cut.

Dr Friedman and I went into a big, bare classroom where about twenty boys and three or four girls were sitting on chairs they had dragged up in a semicircle around a sofa, on which he and I sat. The children looked bright and expectant. "I say everything in German and then repeat it in English. They are supposed to reply in English," Dr Friedman said to me. He began by holding up a newspaper and calling out, "What is this in my hand?"

"A newspaper!" the children shouted.

"What is contained in the newspaper?" Dr Friedman asked in German, and then repeated it in English.

"Politik!" roared the children, and one boy, who was wearing American battle dress, got up and began a rambling political speech which made everybody laugh. "They're all ardent politicians," Dr Friedman said to me, and then added encouragingly to the speaker, "Good! But what else is in a paper?"

"News of the world," some of the children said. "Economic news," said a dark, handsome, intelligent-looking boy named Witold, who Dr Friedman said was the son of a Polish municipal engineer shot by the Nazis in 1939.

"Can you remember one piece of recent news that especially concerned us here in the hostel?" asked Dr Friedman.

"Belsen children arrive in England!" cried someone, and there was laughter.

"Less food for everybody in England!" cried another boy.

"Less food for everybody in England," said Dr Friedman. "Now, is that political news or economic news?"

"Both,"said Witold.

"Not bad, eh?" said Dr Friedman proudly, in an undertone. The news item to which he was referring, however, turned out to be about Palestine. He then touched on the United States loan to Great Britain. "Is Britain a rich country?" he asked.

"Not now," said Arthur. "Was," he added politely.

"What do you think of England?" asked Dr Friedman. "Speak freely! Say what you think, no matter what it is."

The boys hesitated, grinning and uncertain. At last Arthur said, "The English are very kind - " He was flattened by Dr Friedman with a good-natured "That is no opinion. It means nothing - like saying someone is nice."

"They speak short," said another boy.

"He means the English are laconic," Dr Friedman said to me.

A curly-haired, pleasant-faced boy of about sixteen, who had evidently thought out what he wanted to say, began carefully to say it. Dr Friedman said that his name was Kurt and that an American newspaperman had taken a great fancy to him and was making arrangements to adopt him. "What I like best about England," Kurt said, "is that each man is free to speak what he thinks. Also, he can read what he likes. That is the democratic life, and it is good."

"A fine answer," said Dr Friedman. After a few more remarks on English traditions and characteristics, Dr Friedman mentioned the Nuremberg trials, and the group began to thaw out. They all started talking at once, and Dr Friedman had to hold up a hand to slow them down.

"The English are too soft!" shouted Arthur.

Kurt jumped to his feet, energetically protesting, but was stopped by Dr Friedman, who calmly said, "Didn't we just say that free speech was the best part of a democracy? Each can say what he will."

"All know the Nazis are murdering, bad men," said Arthur passionately. "Why have the English give them trial and try to save them? All the Germans laugh at the English and the Americans because they so soft. Is true," he added, glancing defiantly at Kurt.

Nearly all his companions nodded. "Kill every Nazi twice!" someone shouted. Kurt look distressed. Keeping his eyes cast down on the pencil he held in one hand, he said earnestly, "If the English kill them without

trial, all the other Germans have felt, `It is no good; they are no better than Nazis themselves.' Then they have given up hope, and maybe another Hitler finds it a good time to come into power."

"These children find it impossible to believe that people in England want to feed the starving Germans," Dr Friedman said to me. "I have told them that there is a movement in this country, headed by Victor Gollancz, an English publisher who is a Jew, like themselves, to send food to Germany, but it is incomprehensible to them."

At the end of the discussion, the Doctor asked the children what they wanted to be when they grow up. Lots of the boys, including Witold, said, "Technician." "Cook and pastry cook!" cried Arthur, smacking his lips pleasurably, as though he saw a lifetime of *Apfelstrudel* before him. Several others said that they wanted to be cooks; possibly they felt they didn't want to take any chances in the future. One boy said that he wanted to be a gravedigger, and a boy with dimples got up and said shyly that he wanted to be a leather worker. *"Mein Vater,"* he explained, "was a tanner." "I go to America!" shouted a merry-looking boy, and Dr Friedman murmured, "He has a father there, last heard of fighting in the Pacific. Who knows?" "Atlantic City!" the boy cried, looking knowledgeable and laughing.

Some of the children had not spoken at all throughout the session. The big, blond fellow who had been in Dachau was one. Most of the time he had listened, and he had laughed at some of the answers, but I noticed that he and some of the other children had occasionally sunk into a brown study and stopped paying any attention to what was going on. Maybe this was the self-protective knack of withdrawal which you must learn in order to survive in a concentration camp. Now one of the boys proudly showed me the ring on his left hand. It was a crude metal thing, made in Belsen, and he pointed out the dates 1941 and 1945 engraved on it. "When I come in and when I come out," he explained. Several of the children had similar little ornaments - two or three more rings, and a medallion engraved with the sad name "Treblinka." One boy rolled up a sleeve and exhibited his camp number tattooed in blue on his forearm. He did it quite calmly, but it was a relief when a jolly, freckled girl, showing me a bracelet made of threepenny bits, said happily, "From mine auntie in London." The other children looked at her respectfully.

Dr Friedman said that before I left I must take a look at the sick bay. Invalids are put in what was formerly the chauffeur's flat - several sunny, warm rooms, now in the charge of a bright-faced nurse. One patient, a boy, was sitting up in bed playing with a chemistry set. "He's one of the few children who have found relatives among other parties of refugees in this country," the nurse said. "One of the workers from the Windermere Reception Centre, where the first lot of Belsen children went, was here helping me get ready for a group. We had all the children's tooth mugs lined up, with each child's name on his own, and when this girl saw this boy's mug, she said, `Why, that's the same name as two boys in our camp!' They turned out to be his brothers, who had been parted from him for years - the parents disappeared somewhere in the usual concentration-camp way - and now they're down here with him. He's just escaped pneumonia, but he's getting on fine. Thank goodness, we haven't had a ghost of an epidemic since the children arrived. We keep a careful lookout, naturally." There were two other children in the sick bay - a girl who reared a startled head from a nest of blankets as we entered her room, and a dark-complexioned boy, dressed in American Army shirt, pants, and overseas cap, by the fire in the nurse's sitting room, laboriously tackling the critical first row of a newly cast-on bit of knitting. "There's nothing the matter with him any more, but he likes to drop back and see me," said the nurse. "All the children like it over here. It's cosy and more homelike, I suppose. I've been showing one of the girls how to knit, and he had to try, too." The boy had run into a snarl, and he confidingly handed his knitting over to her to straighten out, as though he were a much younger child. His occupation and his soldierly kit made an odd contrast. When she had straightened out the snarl, the nurse passed the knitting back to him and said to me, "That little girl Margaret you saw lying down upstairs - she'll be down to tea in a moment. She was very ill with typhoid, but she's quite all right now. But she slips back to me whenever she can." She smiled warmly. "What Margaret needs is what they all need and have never had in their lives. A little mothering, that's all."

Next Dr Friedman took me to see the block of Army huts, which were warm and light. Some of them were dormitories, furnished with wooden bunks; others served as classrooms. The boys sleep in these dormitories; the girls and the staff sleep in the house. In one hut, a woman teacher was giving an English lesson to Kurt. As we came in, he looked up triumphantly from a dictionary and cried, *"Tpferware* is `pot-

tery`!" He acted as though he had just dug up a nugget. "The more advanced ones have private lessons," said Dr Friedman as we walked on. "They're quick linguists, most of them. Many of the children can speak Polish and Russian, and maybe Hungarian or Rumanian, as well as German of a kind, and now some English. As I have told you, they are eager to learn, not only from books but from the world. They know that they have missed so much and they are starving for experience of all kinds. The other evening a children's ballet from Southampton came to dance for them. They were entranced; they sat spellbound. No rude noises from the bigger boys! Nothing! We arrange similar little treats for them - trips to London to see a few sights, and so on. There is tremendous competition for these trips, but I take the children strictly in turn, and when I say to a boy, `It will be your turn next time,' he goes away with a dark face, and I know that he does not believe me. They have no faith, no belief at all in a next time." Dr Friedman sighed and ran his hands over his hair. "That is perhaps the worst thing Belsen and Buchenwald have done to these children," he said. "But they will learn. I do not believe that it will ever leave their minds completely, but they will learn to be men and women who take pride in themselves, who can hope, who can look forward to tomorrow and know that it will come."

HOSTELS - the Path to Rehabilitation

(This article by the late Henry Green was reproduced from our brochure on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of our liberation.)

Liberation came to us in many ways and varied circumstances. Some, I imagine, were strong enough to be about to see the Germans run for their lives or saw them surrender. It must have been a sight to see, an emotion of a lifetime to experience.

I was flat on my back, ill, pretty well on my way out and certainly past caring. Needless to say, I saw none of it.

Instead, I woke up one day to find myself in a hospital bed. A bed with linen, clean linen I might add, and people caring for me. Caring for ME!

Cardros Hospital - Scotland 1946

Goldington, Bury, Bedford, 1946

Manchester, 1946

Stamford Hill, 1946

Finchley Road, 1946

It was not long before I was able to get up and found myself convalescing in a children's home in Theresienstadt. My first HOSTEL.

I shared a room with four or five other boys. This, of course, was heaven when you consider the crowded conditions that I had been used to until then.

Erna, our matron, had two girls to help her and soon we became one small family. Some of us were more energetic than others, but we were all getting gradually used to becoming individuals again. I began to discover that I am a person in my own right - quite a revelation after years of propaganda about "vermin" and "parasites", etc.

One could not leave Theresienstadt without a permit, add to it that it was a garrison town, life was inevitably somewhat restricted, a good thing in a way as it introduced us into normal life in a city in a gradual way.

The arrival in Prague was quite an experience. The friendliness and hospitality of the Czech people is something I, for one, shall never forget. It was in Prague that I went to a circus and to a cinema for the first time as a free person.

Then England by courtesy of R.A.F. Bomber Command. There were no seats or "mod-cons". We sat where we could. On the floor, on boxes, anything at all. The R.A.F. men acting as stewards, communicated with us in sign language. We spoke no English.

Carlisle aerodrome and then by coach to Windermere. Windermere, what a delightful place!

On arrival I was shown into a tiny room with a bed, chest of drawers and wardrobe. A room all to myself! Has anyone ever lived so luxuriously?

It was a particular time of, certainly, my life when there could have been no gift more precious. For the first time in years, in my short life, I would have the luxury of a room ALL TO MYSELF. I could have danced in the street for joy. I could and would have except for a small "technicality".

Well, the clothes in which we arrived were suspect - from a cleanliness viewpoint, and so it had been planned to have new clothes waiting for us on arrival. There was a hitch. We arrived first. No clothes, except for underwear. Well, we were issued these and nought else. Since we could not wear our old clothes, underwear was all we had.

I just danced, metaphorically speaking, in my new room.

Windermere, my second hostel - home, where a group of friendly people, including Alice Goldberger, helped me and the others in various ways; teaching English, etc., and where I began to make friends with England and the English.

It was a happy time for me. I had the proximity of so many friends, sharing a dining room with them and participating in a variety of activities and yet being able to retire to the luxury of my PRIVATE room. I cannot recapture the wonder of it in words sufficient to do the feeling justice. However, I have no doubt that those who shared this experience with me will know precisely what I mean.

Windermere - "Wondermore" - as I like to call it, stands out for me for it was, apart from its renowned natural beauty, my own reintroduction to a new life as an individual where living was no longer on the level of the animal's instinct for survival but things of the spirit, of sight, sound and touch began to matter. Wonderful things were

Quaremead, 1946

Loughton, 1946

Cardros, Scotland 1946

Nightingale Road, 1947

Boys from the Ascot Hostel

happening in "Wondermore". A happy, happy time.

Three months or so went by very quickly and it was time to move on yet again.

Scotland. Darleith House was about three miles from the village of Cardross in Dumbartonshire. It was in the style of a mansion set in its own extensive grounds with a rhododendron-flanked drive leading to it from the keeper's lodge about a quarter of a mile away.

It would be quite easy again to become ecstatic about the beauty of the setting and the general splendour of the place which, as my third hostel, was about to become my new home, but to do so would be no more than to state a fact.

Here I must pause and say something for the people who planned all this for us. It was obvious that a lot of effort, accompanied by a generous breadth of imagination went into finding these places for our benefit. I feel that a deep humanity, coupled with an understanding of our need to be in lovely surroundings as an antidote to the ugliness that we had encountered in our lives hitherto, was the visionary motive in all this.

To these people, whoever they are, MY SALUTE.

Cardross was more or less akin to life in Windermere with the same aims, pursuits and, above all, its country setting.

Glasgow was different and here I began to work, still living communally in a hostel. I was learning a trade and studying in my spare time. Gradually city life was something I was taking in my stride and soon, feeling confident of being able to cope for myself, I moved with a friend from the hostel and into "digs". Life has come full circle. I began a "normal" life.

SOME NOTES ON THE WORK WITH CONTINENTAL YOUTH FROM THE CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Wolfgang David Gordon - May 1946

(Reprinted from Journal No. 9, page 22, December 1981)

The author was a member of the staff at Windermere and subsequently Madrich at the Nightingale Road Hostel, Stamford Hill. We understand that this article was written as a report for Hashomer Hazair on behalf of which he was working with us.

The observations related in the following report are based on my experiences with Jewish children with whom I worked at the Reception Camp in Windermere between August and December 1945. I consider what they reveal could have a universal application in the care of refugees from whatever area of conflict or misery.

Before giving an account of the conditions and problems of these children, I should point out that this is necessarily a general report which does not claim to do justice to every individual child concerned. Also a different group might present another set of problems calling for a different psychological and educational approach.

The 300 boys and girls who went through our camp at Windermere were predominantly of Polish descent. Some remarks on their background and early environment may help in understanding their reaction to the experiences with which they were confronted during the Second World War.

East European Jews are known for their strong family ties. Relations between parents and children are exceptionally close and, as a result, there is a very great dependence of the child on the family. Consequently, separation brings with it greater strain and hardship.

To understand the extraordinary capacity of these youngsters to endure their terrible fate, it should be noted that their consciously Jewish upbringing never allowed for any feeling of racial inferiority; a feeling which was present with many assimilated Jews from Western European countries. Our boys' and girls' knowledge of Jewish history and their consciousness of belonging to a great and ancient people, served as a source of strength, and reinforced their moral resistance. The majority of them were separated from their parents early in the war and put to work in labour gangs. Later they were sent to a number of different concentration camps.

Shortly before the end of hostilities the Germans marched these children from all parts of the Reich to Theresienstadt (Czechoslovakia) which was to be the last big extermination camp. Here they were liberated by the Russians in May 1945.

When preparing ourselves for the reception, we expected to meet frightened and intimidated youngsters who would approach us with distrust and scepticism. Reality proved us wrong and we were soon face-to-face with a lively crowd of children who seemed completely uninhibited and active.

The majority of the boys and girls were between the ages of 14 and 19.

Although only 15% of them were in need of hospital treatment (suffering mostly from TB), nearly all were in poor health and in need of some months of restful life. Their general physical weakness was reflected, at least during the first period, in a certain lack of endurance and an inability to concentrate on lessons for more than about 2 hours.

Far from being reserved, they talked freely about their sufferings, and showed themselves very eager indeed to relate their experiences. It was not long before a very good relationship of trust and confidence between staff and children was established. The reason for this success lies, in my opinion, in the fact that most of the workers were young and experienced youth leaders. That they were also Jewish, and that all that happened to the children could have happened to them, made it undoubtedly easier for them to gain their confidence.

The children's' genuine respect for almost all the educational staff was remarkable. They would repeatedly express their gratitude for the help extended to them, and for the fact that they were treated as normal and equal. Soon regarding us as real friends, they frequently told us of their wish to become the normal human beings they saw us as, insisting that they themselves were in many ways inferior, having been robbed of a normal healthy and secure development.

Consequently, their main concern was to make up speedily for all they had missed, to acquire knowledge and generally to become "a human being like you". Although it can be seen from this that a very healthy attitude to life was the basic characteristic of those youngsters, which was expressed in a strong urge to build their own future, it was, of course, natural that their

experiences did affect their behaviour.

Aggressiveness was one of the results of those past experiences. It found an outlet in the rather destructive treatment of furniture and, especially in the initial period, in the many quarrels and fights between the boys. These fights were often of a serious nature, and the highly excited state of the boys made intervention very difficult. Much tact as well as calmness were needed in the handling of such situations. So frequent were these conflicts during the first few weeks that it was inadvisable to leave the boys to themselves, even for a short while.

As a consequence of starvation, and because they had usually had to fight for food, the children were extremely greedy and would ask for larger helpings than they could manage. However, when they discovered that food was plentiful, this greediness receded after some weeks.

The distribution of clothes created a fairly serious administrative problem, and was found to have a direct bearing on the relationship between staff and children, touching as it did one of the most important problems of the individual girl and boy. Whilst being sincerely grateful for our educational endeavours, the children showed an altogether different attitude towards material possessions. Having been stripped of all their belongings, they came to this country full of hopeful assumptions and illusions, and presuming that they were reinforced by a very deep-rooted conception on their part that they, the victims of a cruel fate, had every right to demand material help from those who were spared the horrors of German persecution.

Due mainly to an acute shortage of clothing coupons and general supply difficulties, only a few items of clothes were available for distribution. There were therefore from the beginning not enough suits, shoes, shirts, etc., to satisfy everybody at the ***same time***. This aroused suspicion and distrust, provoking many of the children to resort to dishonesty, when often they would claim not to have received their due share. They would frequently complain that one or other of their comrades had been given more. Rather than wait for further supplies, many would take shoes, etc., which did not fit them, in order to exchange them later.

The importance of clothing cannot be over-rated. The problem of clothing caused the only real disturbance in the children's relationship towards us, and proved to be a disruptive problem in the life of our otherwise very happy community. This anxiety to secure one's share of clothing not only signifies the children's wish to be well dressed, but is a material expression of their desire to regain their individual personality. They wanted to have things which they could call their own, and about the use of which they alone could decide. This was borne out by the fact that after receiving their share, both boys and girls would often, and without regret, give some of their belongings away to others.

After discussing the distribution of clothing, and the problems arising from it, the staff agreed that it would have been better not to give out any item before a sufficient quantity had accumulated, for all the children to have their share at the same time.

The educational and social activities of the camp were of a very varied character. The mornings were taken up by school, and the children revealed an extraordinary interest in almost all subjects. Especially popular were English, history and mathematics. Most of the boys and girls proved rather intelligent and their progress was remarkable. The afternoons were either free or taken up with sports and games; football and other outdoor games were most popular. Evenings saw the children busy with a number of different activities; some played chess, others gathered for a brains trust or discussion circle, still others could be found preparing and rehearsing for a play. As time went on, it was interesting to observe how much more relaxed they were in the way they spent their spare time.

Mental alertness and a strong sense of group solidarity were undoubtedly amongst the most outstanding characteristics of these youngsters. Their deep concern for each other manifested itself on many occasions. If, for example, one of them fell ill or received news from relatives or friends, the whole community soon knew about it, and everybody showed the greatest interest and concern.

Rightly regarding the camp as a temporary arrangement, they looked upon the hostel as their new home which would at long last give them the opportunity for a normal and regular life. Consequently they were extremely careful in their choice of hostels.

Since the first group which left the camp was rather disappointed with its new home, the remaining ones insisted that they should be allowed to inspect their hostel-to-be before leaving the camp. For this purpose they elected one or two representatives whom they entrusted with this inspection. We agreed to this procedure, since we considered this concern for their future was a

healthy attitude. We thought that once a group had decided in favour of a particular hostel, we could confidently expect them to make the best of it. We also left it entirely to the youngsters to form themselves into groups for these communities.

Orthodox organisations provided hostels for religious children. However, 80 - 90% of them were not religious and insisted that they should not be asked to live in orthodox homes. Jealously guarding their right to intellectual and spiritual freedom, one of the groups actually refused a certain religious hostel, declaring that they were not prepared for concessions or compromises where their conscience was concerned.

They also took great care in the choice of leaders who were to go with them to their hostel. The youngsters readily accepted authority from really trusted adults whose leadership they recognised. These children had, during the war, met many people, and had thus acquired the ability to judge and scrutinise them. In this respect they can be compared with experienced grown-ups, and those responsible for the selection of educational staff cannot afford to ignore this.

I have tried to convey some glimpses of our experiences at Windermere, and will now attempt to give my views on the problems of adjustment to hostel life, and on the educational approach which should, in my opinion, be adopted.

I believe the hostel to be the most desirable social framework for such boys and girls. I have already mentioned their deep feelings of solidarity and mutual concern, based on their common experience. This fact, together with the need to facilitate a healthy psychological adjustment to the new and so far unknown "normal" life, necessitates for the individual girl or boy a familiar surrounding. With few exceptions the youngster wishes to be with his friends, and feels comfortable in their company. Life in a private family might, could even in the majority of adolescents, result in loneliness. The atmosphere in the private home consisting of educated adults and children might increase the young person's existing feelings of inferiority.

For these reasons alone, I regard the hostel as the most suitable framework for our refugee youth, at least until they have got used to the new environment of a strange country and a strange language.

The educational problems in the organisation of the hostel life were manifold and demanded a well-defined approach. At Windermere, great freedom was given to the children, because they needed a period of rest, and were not yet in a position to adjust to the reality of a regular disciplined life. In the hostel this adjustment must be aimed at and the daily life should, as nearly as possible, take the form of that of normal adolescents.

In this connection I wish to stress that the boys' attitude to work provided one of the most difficult problems. Having slaved for the Germans, most of our boys developed an aversion to physical work, being unable to regard it as anything but an unfortunate necessity. They argued that having suffered enough hardship, they should not now be asked to do any physical work. Many well-meaning people accepted this argument. Not realising the educational and psychological implications of this reasoning, they maintained that these "poor children" should be given the greatest possible comfort, and protected from the realities of life.

In actual fact, this attitude could bring nothing but harm to the children. It would not help them in their readjustment to society, but it would , on the contrary, increase their feeling of being different from others. Inactivity, if continued over some months, is bound to have a demoralising effect on children. Without physical work no adequate outlet is provided for the creative energies of the boys and girls, nor for their normal aggression.

I am therefore of the opinion that the educational staff should insist on physical work. In most of the hostels the children worked half time, spending the other half of the day studying English, science or other technical and cultural subjects. Although most of the boys did not initially like the requirement for physical work, many found a great deal of satisfaction through it, and most of them came to realise that work is an essential part of the reality of life and was in no way exploitation. Work, of course, should not be expected of children under 17 or 18 for whom schooling should be provided.

Of equal importance to educational work with our children is the creation of a feeling of confidence in the future. Only this confidence in their future will effectively counteract their inner restlessness, anxieties and tensions. Educators must discuss with the children their ideas and plans and then help them to adjust their present life and work to future plans.

In conclusion, I would like to say how greatly moved I was by the way in which these boys and girls proved able to regain self-respect and to achieve a positive attitude to life, and without forgetting their terrible experiences during the way years.

Address given to the Cambridge University Jewish Society on 18TH October 1946 by the late LEONARD G. MONTEFIORE

When your Secretary was kind enough to ask me to address this Society, he suggested as my subject - Reform Judaism. Such an address should have completed a series, Orthodox, Liberal and then Reform which, as some people think, should follow a middle path. I hope, perhaps on another occasion, I may be allowed to attempt that subject. It will keep. But I wanted, while it is still fresh in my mind, to say something about an experiment in education or rehabilitation that before so many months or years will be concluded and become, unlike Reform Judaism, a piece of past history.

For the past 15 months, I have been looking after some 700 Jewish orphans brought to this country from the concentration camps in Germany and Austria for a period of rest, re-training and rehabilitation in mind and body before leaving for their permanent homes, wherever those permanent homes can be found, in Palestine, in America or the British Commonwealth.

The Anglo-Jewish community has had long experience of refugees, displaced persons that is, people compelled by force to leave their homes and start life afresh in another country.

It is a problem that has been growing steadily more difficult to solve. The large numbers of Jews who left Russia in the eighties of the last century and the steady stream that followed the first exodus almost all went to the Units States. Many of them came here for a few weeks. All that was needed in those days was money to buy a steamship ticket. Arrangements were made to shelter and house each fresh batch and then they left by the next boat. Shipping companies competed for the traffic. The immigrants did not ask for expensive accommodation. It was a kind of human freight useful to fill up odd corners on the boats.

Then came 1933 and the emigration from Germany. By this time, the difficulties had increased. Immigration laws and quotas and formalities of every kind had been introduced. Nevertheless, there was no shortage of shipping and by one means and another thousands were helped to proceed on their way.

But in 1945 matters were very different. Before any thought could be given to displaced persons, prisoners of war had to be sent home, troops in their thousands and millions had to be redistributed, G.I. brides, British brides, Canadian brides, had to be provided for. Priorities of all kinds had to be considered.

We had, in this country, in the six years between Hitler's accession to power and the outbreak of war, raised by voluntary contributions something like three million pounds for assisting Jewish refugees. We had brought through the Baldwin Fund some 10,000 children in 1938 from Germany and thus saved their lives in the very nick of time. Some time I hope the history of those children will be written and the contribution they made, are making, and, in my opinion, will make to the country which provided a safe refuge. All this work ceased in September, 1939. The Government took over much of the actual relief work when it was necessary and shortage of labour very soon made it easy to absorb all the refugees in industry.

With the end of the war in sight, it became necessary to consider what, if anything, could be done to help the Jews who had survived on the Continent. The concentration camps had been liberated and appalling stories were reaching this country of the conditions disclosed. There was a very widespread and urgent feeling that something must be done. We could not just sit down and say the task must be left to UNNRA, to AMGOT or to the American Joint Distribution Committee.

I was in Paris myself in May, 1945, and I saw some of the first arrivals brought by air direct from the camps. I have never seen anything so ghastly in my life. The people I saw were like corpses that walked. I shall never quite forget the impression they made. But when we got down to considering what could be done, there were immense difficulties. No money could be sent out of the country, and if money had been sent, there was nothing to buy. But if we could bring the people we wanted to help to this country, then the currency difficulties were cleared out of the way.

In June, 1945, the Home Office gave permission for 1,000 orphans under the ages of 16 to be brought over for recuperation and ultimate re-emigration overseas. We pointed out immediately that it was unlikely that any documents would be available giving proof of age, and that children rescued from the concentration camps would most probably have no identity papers of any kind.

Then we went back to the Army and enquired if they had found any children still alive in the camps. At first we were told there were no children left alive at all, and it seemed as if our

plans had been made in vain. But in August, relief workers for UNRRA told us there was a group of 300 children from Theresienstadt who could be evacuated. This group had been collected at Prague and had been passed fit to travel by a local doctor approved by the British Embassy.

The camps had been overrun by Allied troops in April or May and it was now August. But I still had in mind the walking skeletons, with sunken eyes and yellow parchment skins I had seen in Paris a few months earlier.

It was a shock and a pleasant surprise to see the first batch get out of the planes, looking much fitter and stronger than anything we had expected. With them came some adults who had acted as escorts and who had near relatives in this country. By this means in some cases, women who had escaped to this country before the war met their husbands whom they had never expected again to see alive.

Relief work is rather a drab and tedious business. The highlights are few and far between. People usually cry from sorrow or from pain, or from fear, but tears shed from pure joy are one of those sights that must rejoice God in heaven, always assuming He is interested in affairs of this earth. A room full of people hugging each other, and splashing their cups of tea with tears is a very beautiful sight, something that is more moving than any human words can describe.

But so far as the 300 boys and girls were concerned, there were no family reunions of that kind. Occasionally uncles or aunts turned up, but the children had never seen them, or if they had seen them, it was long ago and they had become strangers.

A number of these orphans have distant relatives and when relationship can be proved, they have every right and indeed the duty to take these children into their own homes. Probably in most cases the arrangement works well, but I wish I could feel confident that it works well in all cases. With a small child, who can be petted and made much of and can rapidly adapt itself, I have no fears, or much fewer, but with the adolescent in its 'teens, there must be mutual give and take and compromise. It is asking a lot from both sides. The boy or girl is bitterly averse to being regarded as an object of charity. On the other side, there can hardly help being some consciousness that this is a duty to be performed, and that some gratitude should be shown for hospitality. But these domestic problems arose only in exceptional cases. For the remainder, we had a team of workers, nurses, teachers, cooks, a Rabbi, most of them drawn from Jewish youth groups, and, on account of the language difficulty, people who could speak German, or Polish, or Yiddish.

At the big Windermere Hostel, the children lived for about three months. They were given a complete medical and dental overhaul. Some had to be sent to hospital and we arranged a mass X-ray for suspected tuberculosis.

Then we started to try and find out what each child wanted to do. Most of us have had, to a very large extent at least, our lives made for us. "So free we seem, so fettered we are," as Andrea del Sarto says in the Browning poem. Most of us take the line of least resistance and that line is not always the worst to adopt. Few people strike out for themselves. In your generation, as in mine, circumstances over which we have no control fashion our lives. Family tradition, military service, it is only in very exceptional cases there is a really free choice. So when we asked these children what they wanted to do and occasionally were told they would like to spend seven years in this country studying to be a doctor, or a professional pianist, or to become a portrait painter, we had to say: "Think of something else". Somehow we had assumed that the answer Palestine or the USA, the reply given in most cases, would be given in all cases. We had assumed, too easily perhaps, that an answer could be given after five years spent in prison, and those five years from 13 to 18. They had gone to prison, children, and they came out in some ways mature beyond their years and in other ways just as when they had been separated from their parents for the last time. For years these boys and girls have been accustomed to be treated as a mass, a group, a unit, call it by what name you please, but not as individuals. We, too, have in a different way experienced group treatment. The school thinks so and so, or the class or the regiment or the college. We take our opinion in all indifferent matters from our neighbours, some things are done, others are not, some things are thought, others are not. How many of our reactions are the result of training, environment and not the result of our own thoughts? For instance, we assume, most of us at least, that the public good takes precedence over private advantage. Unless we thought that instinctively, no civilised state would work. We dimly realise it, and if we pick up a ration book that someone has dropped, we return it to the Food Office. We have formed social habits, we form queues, we accept discipline. But life in a concentration camp taught a very different lesson. Life was

prolonged firstly by physical strength and endurance and courage. Those were the primary requisites. But almost equally important were ingenuity, fraud and disregard of others. It is quite true there were many examples of self-sacrifice, of prisoners taking the place of those too weak to move, of escapes concealed by volunteers taking the missing numbers in some convoy destined for death. Nevertheless, it was those who broke rules and regulations who survived rather than those who observed them. "The reason I am alive", one boy said to me "is that I was strong enough to take a piece of bread from someone who was too weak to eat it". None of us have ever experienced the law of every man for himself. We have never been thrown completely on our own resources in order to remain alive. We have remained civilised and civilised people co-operate. They must co-operate in order to remain civilised. Co-operation is civilisation's hall-mark.

Nearly a year after their arrival in this country, I suggested to one of these boys that it would be a useful piece of work to help in the harvest fields. After all, he was a guest in this country and food was short. I used the stock arguments that would have been accepted with resignation, if not with enthusiasm, by any Sixth Former. Not so the ex-inmate of Buchenwald. He merely said that he was not interested in the British harvest. His work among the sheaves was unlikely to increase his bread ration and that was the only thing that interested him. The reply was unexpected, but when you come to think of it, not unnatural. The only work that boy had every done in his life was forced labour for the Nazis. Work pro bono publico was unknown. Or again, a boy was found tucked up in bed about eleven o'clock in the morning. To suggestions that it was about time to get up, he merely replied, "For the past three years I worked 16 hours a day for the Nazis. If you imagine that I am going to do another hand's turn for the next three years, you are greatly mistaken."

Yet, in other cases, boys will make considerable sacrifices in order to acquire learning, and have had to be restrained from sitting up till the small hours of the morning over their books.

They are still very group conscious and reluctant to form their own opinions and judgments. Here again the contrast between these camp boys and the average Sixth Former or, for that matter, of most English lads, is very marked. When they first arrived, the divisions were sharply marked, the Orthodox, the Zionist, and the various shades of opinion within these groups. Jewish politics played a big part in their lives since their liberation and they had been carefully drilled in their opinions.

It may conceivably be a not unimportant part of the work of rehabilitation to give these boys and girls an opportunity to notice that in a free and civilised country, men and women of very different political and religious views can live together and work together amicably without saying or believing that those who differ are necessarily scoundrels and traitors. They will learn, I hope, that there are other things of value in life besides politics, religious or secular. If one can imagine that, in the future, they may realise there are many people who were interested in them, not as possible recruits to some particular party or section, but merely as human beings, a useful result will have been achieved.

Oppression and cruelty breed intolerance. These children have been cruelly treated and one of the results is they are very intolerant, very reluctant to make the smallest concession or compromise. I suppose it is also reaction. For years they were made to do things by physical compulsion and menace. Now all rules are suspect. In camp, unless they were on the spot to seize their ration of food, they went hungry. Now they are in a free country and therefore meals must be ready for them at any time. In camps they were driven off to any destination their gaolers chose. Now in freedom they refuse to realise that accommodation is limited, that housekeeping is difficult, although they are free to come and go as they like. If the want to visit a friend in Liverpool or Glasgow, why not, they are free, free to do what they please. "We are not at Buchenwald any more, we thought England was a free country; those are concentration camp methods." We are used to self-discipline, we depend on it. These children have only self-control, and it is a lesson most easily learned in childhood. The concentration camp children tend to suspect ulterior motives. One group accused me of wanting to make Englishmen of them. I tried to explain that I had no wish to do that, but I wished very much to teach the virtues of compromise, of level-headedness, of readiness to see and appreciate the other fellow's point of view. I do not think peace can be achieved, and still less maintained, if we train children to be fanatics, however sincerely we believe in any particular cause. That I admit is an idea which many Jewish educationalists do not share. They believe that, having themselves a perfect knowledge of what is right and what is wrong, it is their duty to train up pupils who will conform to the rules, think as they are taught to think and act as they are taught to act.

In dealing with what is in effect a very large school with 700 pupils, with no home influences to help or to hinder, we have only aimed at giving freedom, freedom of movement from place to place, freedom to choose employment, and, so far as funds permit, freedom to choose training and education.

One day, perhaps, we shall learn what the effect of some months or years spent in Great Britain (we have hostels in Scotland) has had on these Jewish children from Poland.

I think certain things have impressed them, or some of the more intelligent of them. They were impressed by the kindness of the R.A.F. who gave them a great welcome and very special teas at the airports when they arrived. They have been impressed with the kindness of educational authorities who welcomed their attendance at evening classes and continuation schools. They have been impressed by the absence of anti-Jewish prejudice.

No doubt, there have been certain disappointments. They thought England was a very rich country where all the things they had missed for so many years would be provided by the incredible number of incredibly rich Jews who lived here. They had not the faintest conception of economic conditions prevailing in this country.

I wish they could have made more contacts, but they are not very keen on private hospitality. "We don't want to be made to feel schnorrers", they say! And they do not like leaving the protective familiarity of the group, the hostel where they are among friends who have been with them during their camp life.

The seven hundred have been split up among twenty-four or twenty-five residential hostels, and a number have gone into residential hostels, and a number have gone into Jewish boarding houses, while others are being looked after by relatives. Many are now at work and earning reasonable wages, others are at school.

On the whole, their health is good. But we have a few hapless invalids, boys of seventeen or eighteen who are consumptives and who can never hope to recover. It has been very difficult indeed to provide for these cases that need specialised treatment. However kind and well-meaning the English staff may be, these Polish boys are lonely figures in the ward, and there is very little one can do to mitigate the loneliness.

But the hostels are happy places. The boys and girls live in the present and do not worry unduly about the future. And yet, one cannot help wondering how one would feel if at sixteen one had been left utterly alone without a single relation in the whole world, with no-one who cared very much if you lived or if you died, if you were happy or if you were miserable.

We take so many things for granted. The home that always has been and always will be open to us, under all circumstances, whatever we do or leave undone. I contrast my own boyhood with that of the boy I visited a few days ago. He has spinal tuberculosis and is semi-paralysed. He is having every care and attention but the clinic is in the country and some distance from London. On Sunday afternoon, visitors come and there is a cheerful buzz of conversation in the ward. But the Jewish boy lies alone staring into vacancy. Yes - Hitler has passed this way.

Not all the gold of Ophir or the wealth of Croesus can help him, but for the majority of these orphans, so long as they remain in this country, money can do a good deal if it is wisely spent. I admit the numbers we can help are very small and I admit if I were working in a DP camp in Germany, I should look enviously on the care that is being lavished on the fortunate few who have been brought to this country. I think one can call them fortunate on account of the freedom that is theirs, the nearer approach they can make to the life of an ordinary boy and girl who has not been in a concentration camp and whose parents have not been murdered. However much is done in a DP camp, it remains camp life.

Something in fairness must be put on the other side. For the comparatively small number of young children (the Germans ruthlessly destroyed nearly every Jewish child too young to work at munitions or in the mines), a first-class country home is maintained and staffed by the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Moreover, in the case of the adolescents, it seems likely that Youth Aliyah Certificates for entry into Palestine will be distributed on the Continent rather than in this country. Zionists sometimes have said to me that for those who wish to settle in Palestine, in a Kibbutz or Kvutzah, training in Germany is a better preparation than the rather freer life led in this country. I think it can be argued that, in the long run, there is a compensating advantage in having seen life in many different aspects, town as well as country, and for having made contacts with non-Jews as well as Jews. For those children who have relatives in America and will eventually go to the United States, there are obvious advantages in opportunities for learning English and for industrial training. Totalitarianism is, in my opinion, an evil thing, in education just as elsewhere. There is no one kind of exis-

tence that is supremely good. God and man can be served on the farm or in the workshop, in the school or in the university, behind the shop counter or the street stall. So far as it is possible to avoid pressure in one direction or another, it should be avoided. Let those children, this handful of survivors be free. Let them be free to fashion their own lives after their own wishes so far as that may be. Above all, perhaps, let them become individuals, each with a mind and an opinion of his or her own, not selfish but social, not egotistic but co-operative.

And thus I come back to where I started - the West London Reform Synagogue in Upper Berkeley Street. By no stretch of imagination is it conceivable that any one of these children will become a member of the Reform Synagogue. So I can, at least, say that I am not seeking recruits for my own particular tabernacle. I hope when they leave this country there will be the same diversity of outlook among these children as when they arrived. That diversity has made them a very interesting group. I hope they will have gained insight into and appreciation of the essential virtues of this country, its kindly tolerance, its profound sympathy with suffering, its willingness to help if given the opportunity. And, just here and there, perhaps, there may be a few people who would otherwise have remained ignorant, who will have learned the virtues of the Polish Jew, his courage and patience, his humour and gaiety, his many engaging characteristics which have survived undimmed the years of persecution and cruelty.

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.

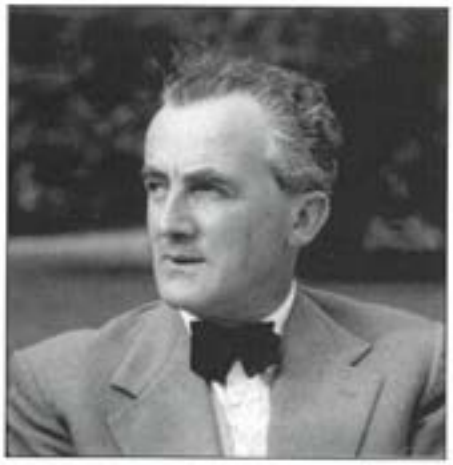
There was only one solution left: *Aliyah*. But the gates of Palestine were guarded stronger than ever. For *Aliyah* B we were too weak. And all our hopes were just about to leave, when we got a chance to come to Britain, to train in a free country, and at that time a friendly one too, for Palestine. 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.

PRIMROSE CLUB

Yogi Mayer

(Reproduced from our brochure on the 30th Anniversary of our liberation 1945 - 75)



Oscar Friedman

Oscar Friedman asked me to join him at 24/25 Belsize Park, a place known to me as "Mrs Gluckman's British Restaurant". He wanted my advice. Did I think those premises suitable for a club and how did I think one ought to approach the idea of forming a club for the "Children rescued from the concentration camps" - a typical approach for Oscar Friedman, just an attempt to get me so involved that I would give up whatever I was doing and try to put my thoughts into practice.

Oscar was right. I accepted, but under one condition only; that this would be an "open club"; that anyone could become a member as long as he or she was asked by one of those children to join their club. Some "children", as I was to learn soon enough.

The opening was chaotic - particularly as there were free refreshments at the coffee bar. My wife feared for her life when the first on-rush started.

Weeks later, when our four football teams returned to the club for Miss Mahrer's Vienna cakes and trifles, I saw again with utter amazement what an immense amount of food those boys could manage.

The backbone of the club was the hostel on the top floor. I was Club Leader as well as Warden, signing school reports for some, notes for absence for others and chasing a group having a "spiel" in the attic down to the boiler room.

Miss Mahrer's cakes not only enthralled the members; I found Mr Montefiore down in the kitchen, at a time when he was urgently required at a board meeting, eating Vienna strudel, listening to a gesticulating excited youngster and finally giving him some money. When I teased him for not having realised that he had listened to a pack of lies, he laughingly agreed "but the boy told lies so charmingly".

Sunday started with volleyball and preparations for football matches. I shall never forget Primrose's battle-cry "Moishe, schiess!" and the fights after when a match had been lost. These boys just could not accept a defeat anymore! Then came the "nosh-up" in the club and finally what must have been one of the noisiest and biggest discussion groups ever in any youth club, with over a hundred

Mr Yogi Mayer

Dr "Ginger" Friedman

involved members trying to express their opinions.

At one of their first meetings, the name for the club was discussed. Many wanted to call it "Freedom Club", others wanted to make use of famous names. Finally they drifted to their first real English action, a compromise. The name chosen was "Primrose", the club being so close to Primrose Hill. Romek won the badge competition. Natek, the future developer in the U.S.A. and Moniek, who became an accountant, accepted the post of Treasurer. And so we discovered Romek's artistic talent, which led him to qualify as an architect. Beniek's mental and physical strength made him not only a natural leader but also a member of the British Olympic Games Team. "Brains" Jerzy is now a university lecturer, as is Kurt, who is at the L.S.E. Others showed their inclinations to get on. They succeeded as is apparent to anyone who attends these re-unions.

There were club holidays in Jersey, when the boys revolted and formed a "men only" society. Boys were in the majority amongst these "survivors" but they brought what they called "English" girls into the club, Jewish girls born in England. And today, there are many dozens of marriages based

Jersey Holidays

on first meetings at the club.

After two years the club moved across into St. Peter's Hall, as the Jewish developer next door wanted both houses. However, most of the so-called children rescued from the concentration camps had become young adults, standing on their own feet. I searched, and when I found 523 Finchley Road, my job was done. I felt free to join Brady in the East End and handed over Primrose to Solly Marcus at new premises.

But the end of the club was near. Solly went to the Jewish Blind Society and the building bought for £9,000 by the Jewish Youth Fund and the Jewish Refugee Committee, was available to Habonim.

When I joined the British Army during the first months of the war, being a refugee myself, there was a large sign "No vacancies" outside the recruitment office in Norwich at a time when Eastern Europe was already suffering under Nazi terror! In the final stages of the war, I served with the S.O.E., many of whom parachuted into Yugoslavia, Austria and one even into Germany. My section, one of the last to go, insisted again and again, that we would like to drop near the camps. But there was no chance to permit a British plane to land in Russia. It was too far for a non-stop flight and so one failed to save more children during those last stages of the war.

When those children who were finally rescued from the camps by others needed a club, as a step into Britain, I felt compelled to help. Those two or three years were most exciting, demanding and immensely rewarding.

I wonder whether there is anywhere another group of immigrants who came without anything, no funds, no education or skills. Surely the achievements of the group of 732 children rescued from the concentration camp would warrant a special study by a sociologist. Now their own achievements become over-shadowed by those of their own children, the second generation. No doubt, Churchill coined the right phrase "Hitler's loss was Britain's gain".

Collecting the Trophy on behalf of the Primrose Club who won the 1951 Annual A.J.Y. Athletic Championship

Training at Ort School

One of the Primrose Teams

Address given by BEN HELFGOTT on the occasion of the 10TH Anniversary of our Liberation, 7TH May 1955

We have gathered here today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of our liberation and although this is a momentous meeting to all of us, it is inevitable from the nature of its function that I have to recall the past and thus unleash old wounds and memories.

Ten years ago, from the millions who perished at the hands of the barbaric Nazis, we were among the fortunate few who were rescued by the allied forces and once again became free human beings. Most of us, by then, had already lost our families and were completely in the dark as to what was going to happen to us and undecided as to what to do. To return to our respective countries was like committing suicide. We have never cherished any love or devotion for these countries; the hatred, persecution and bitter anti-Semitism that prevailed there before the war still lingered in our minds. Besides, we were very frightened. We were free but were still obsessed with fear - all kinds of fear.

The stabilising framework of the family pattern had long been broken and in most of cases non-existent. That twin pillar of independence and security which plays such an important part in the mental development of young people was deplorably absent. True, our experiences in the camps and the early loss of our parents, which meant that we had to fend for ourselves at an early age, has given us a maturer outlook. But at the end of the war we were still adolescents who were in great need of guidance and care.

It was in this mood of trial and tribulation, apprehension and anxiety, that fortune smiled on us and supplied us with the answer to our problem of the day.

Due to the relentless efforts of a number of English Jews, some of whom we have the honour to have with us here tonight, we were admitted to this country and given a chance to rehabilitate ourselves.

The process of our adjustment was not an easy one. The social workers had a most unenviable task as we were the most difficult customers imaginable. But then, our background and experience was such that we could not have been ourselves had we behaved differently.

During the last ten years that have passed, great radical changes have taken place in our lives. The ready co-operation of the English people in general and the Jewish community in particular has helped us to restore our confidence and stability. The British way of life, based on the Rule of Law, Popular Government, and on the spirit of tolerance and freedom, has had a profound and salutary effect on us. It has helped us to modify our views on society and see things in a different light. It has given us a more balanced outlook and thus made us appreciate the responsibilities incumbent upon the individual in the community.

I should perhaps mention that well over half of our groups have emigrated to other countries to join their relatives. Some went to fight for Israeli Independence, something we should all be very proud of, and, may I here pay tribute to their courage.

In spite of the lapse of time and the distances that separate us, we still maintain contact with each other and are always very interested to learn about each others' progress. We are like a large family spread all over the world but united by a common bond that springs from our similar experiences in the past. We know that we can always rely on each other and that we are not alone and this is a most gratifying thought.

You will forgive me if I bring out an aspect of our past that is often overlooked, that is, Jewish pre-war life in Poland and in the other Eastern countries.

Who of us can forget the traditional ceremonies, customs, dress and the intense religious fervour that was so pervading and that had remained unchanged throughout so many centuries. Anachronistic as it was, it had a charm and beauty that the very thought of it evokes in us a deep emotional feeling. Whether we come from orthodox or non-orthodox families, we cannot help but have a feeling of nostalgia and sentiment about it which seems to grow stronger as we get older. I believe it is especially felt during the Jewish festivals. This makes our bond even closer.

Finally, may I express the hope that the best way of reciprocating our appreciation and gratitude to the community will be to serve it to the best of our ability by taking an active and responsible part in its affairs.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

(Given by the late H Oscar Joseph, O.B.E., on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of our liberation, 10th May 1970)

After Twenty-Five Years

Five years ago, on the occasion of the twentieth Anniversary of the end of the war, I endeavoured in my message for your Dinner to recall the circumstances of our initial meeting:-

"It was at this point that our relationship with you commenced. Approaches were made to the British Government, and with a minimum of fuss and delay, permission was given for 1,000 young persons to be brought over for the purpose of rehabilitating them. Very few conditions were imposed, although it was understood that financial responsibility for their maintenance would be assumed by the Central British Fund.

"In the event 732 arrived here under the scheme. All of us can recall the reception camps which were the first places of habitation in this country - Windermere, Southampton, Carlisle, and the Jews Temporary Shelter. I well remember my first meeting with some of you when I spent a weekend in the Windermere Camp, where activities were already taking place.

"Somewhat later on the reception camps were broken up and smaller groups were placed in hostels. Names such as Alton, Hemel Hempstead, Gateshead, Loughton, Lingfield, Polton House and Belsize Park, will evoke memories, as indeed they should, for they represent the milestones along the road to rehabilitation. Belsize Park, too, was the centre of the Primrose Club, founded for the new refugees and which proved such a successful venture until the premises had to be vacated. Nor should we forget Quare Mead (donated by Leonard Montefiore) to take care of those T.B. cases who could no longer be left in the hospitals. Fortunately, this proved to be a fairly short term problem and all the patients were eventually cured."

After a quarter of a century, none of us can look back on the events of May, 1945, without deep emotion. You, the Members of the '45 Aid Society, were provided with Passports to Freedom and life in a new country. The long programme of rehabilitation involved many adjustments which were made possible only by the mutual confidence that was created.

I always feel that one of the most gratifying developments has been the establishment of the '45 Aid Society which has maintained its strength and has succeeded in keeping contact not only with its members in London and Manchester but also with a number who have emigrated. The Society does valuable philanthropic work and I was very proud when I was invited to be your President. I want to pay my tribute to the Chairman, Honorary Officers and Members of the Committee who devote so much time and effort to the cause.

I look forward to seeing you at the Dinner.

On celebrating the 30TH Anniversary of our Liberation

(This article by the late Kurt Klappholz, who was a Reader at the LSE, was reproduced from our Newsletter in Autumn 1974)

1975 is the year of the 30th Anniversary of our liberation. For individuals and for groups of people life is full of anniversaries. Why *do* we celebrate these anniversaries, and *should* we celebrate them? Why individuals celebrate their private anniversaries is possibly of some interest to anthropologists and sociologists; whether they should is strictly a matter for them. When we come to groups of people a little more can perhaps be said about the merits of celebrating any particular anniversary. For example, we should not be surprised and not a little shocked, if we suddenly heard that the Germans had begun to *celebrate* the anniversary of the outbreak of World War II. The emphasis here is on "celebrate". The Germans have very good reasons for *remembering* the outbreak of the War, but no good reasons at all for celebrating its anniversary and, as far as I know, they don't. In our own case, I think good reasons could be adduced for the group celebration, and perhaps also for urging individuals to join it. I shall devote a little space to the first point, but

none to the second. I shall merely confess that I am an inveterate joiner in these celebrations. I was there, you might even say conspicuously there, when we celebrated the first Anniversary of our liberation in Seymour Hall in 1946; the 5th in the Refectory in Golders Green in 1950; the 10th in Leicester Square in 1955; the 20th in Kilburn in 1965. (I missed the 25th Anniversary in 1970 owing to my absence abroad at a conference.) And I shall be there, conspicuously or otherwise, when we come to celebrate our 30th Anniversary next year.

Having mentioned this series of Anniversaries, and thus the passage of time since we first started our celebrations, it behoves me to make a few brief remarks on the history of our group over that period. I think it can be said without any exaggeration that it is a history of unqualified success, as our Chairman, Ben Helfgott, frequently observes. When the War ended and the victorious Allied Armies rescued us from imminent death, one could hardly say that our experience had been an ideal preparation for life in a free society. One could say that there exist other experiences, e.g., spending one's adolescence in the bosom of one's family without suffering from starvation, and attending a decent school, which are a better preparation for that purpose! And yet, despite this, we have acquitted ourselves pretty well in the competitive game of free-enterprise societies. There are among us people who have succeeded in entering the professions, others who have done creditably well in business, and hardly any, as far as I am aware, who are a charge on the State. Moreover, the next generation, i.e., our children, bid fair to do at least as well, if not better, than we have done. Of course, we were helped generously when we first arrived here and we shall be ever grateful for that help. (Although it may be individuous to mention individuals in this connection, it is difficult to avoid thinking of the late Leonard G. Montefiore, O.B.E.) At a time when there is much controversy about the way in which the State should help those who are in need, we stand out as examples of those who used the help they received to help themselves.

During the period of our incarceration most of us developed our own private symbols which represented the "essence" of normal life, a life which we hardly dared to hope we could ever live again. My own symbol was the curtains which covered the windows of the private family houses I saw on the way to and from work. Even when I first arrived in this country and walked along Finchley Road gazing at the curtained windows of the family houses, I still could not believe that I would ever live in a house like that. True, the windows of the hostels in which we lived were also curtained; but comfortable and comforting as our hostels were, they were not *our* family houses. For many years now most, if not all, of us have been living in houses with windows covered with just those curtains which 30 years ago symbolised for me a life from which I would be forever excluded. I regard that as no mean achievement.

To return to the reasons for our celebration. For us, the Anniversary of our liberation is literally a second birthday anniversary. The liberation not only snatched us from certain death, it also ended a period during which, though physiologically alive, it could hardly be said that we lived. Thus our celebration commemorates a communal resurrection, which is one of the bonds that has united us hitherto, and will continue to unite us until not one of us is left to celebrate another Anniversary.

An Anniversary such as this is inevitably a time for reviving memories. When I look back at my own experience in the camps I must confess that the memories are not too painful. The reasons for this are probably those to which I referred in speeches during previous celebrations; our own suffering was mainly physical, because hunger saved us from what, in its absence, might have been much more serious spiritual suffering. Physical suffering alone probably does not leave intolerable memories. But in addition to the memories of our own, physical, suffering, we have other memories which do not seem to grow less painful with the passage of time. I am referring, of course, to the memories of the tragedy that befell our families. That tragedy is sometimes, indeed often, unthinkingly described as the "martyrdom of European Jewry". I find that description a sickeningly grotesque travesty of history. No doubt it springs from the natural desire to glorify the innocent victims of Nazi madness; at the same time, however, it makes that madness seem less mad.

When we speak of martyrs we normally have in mind people who chose to suffer in pursuit of a cause when they could avoid the suffering by abandoning it. *This choice was never open to the Jews of Europe.* No conceivable action on their part could have alleviated their suffering. The notion that "the Jews" stood for any particular idea, any particular cause, attributes to them a degree of *Gleichschaltung* which they would never have voluntarily embraced. Those who refer to

them as "Martyrs" thus subscribe to a part of the monstrous Nazi mythology, albeit unwittingly and with the best intentions. The European Jews were no more and no less than deliberately selected innocent victims of State power exercised by men whose wickedness it is hard to distinguish from insanity. To say that the Jews did *not* die as martyrs is in no sense to belittle their suffering, or to denigrate them. I cannot conceive of the grounds on which one would be less or different, but we must not seek that consolation by falsifying history. We have no alternative but to live with the memory of lives gratuitously and wickedly destroyed.

Each one of us has to decide for himself how to cope with these memories, for which time does not seem to be the proverbial healer. But perhaps it is appropriate to indicate the kind of attitudes which these memories should *not* engender. In saying what I am about to say, I think I am speaking *for* our group rather than *to* it.

Our memories do not lead us to bear grudges against, or feel hatred towards, individual people merely because they are members of a particular group (e.g., Germans). Had we succumbed to such feelings, we would have provided our erstwhile persecutors with an entirely gratuitous victory, for we would have adopted *their* attitudes. Our own history testifies to the fact that we did not succumb in this way. This is one of the victories our erstwhile persecutors did not achieve.

There is no escaping the fact that our celebration is not only a celebration; it is also, always was and will be, an occasion for re-living the most painful memories and for saying a uniquely bitter Kaddish.

Address by DR. DAVID PATTERSON in response to the setting up of the '45 Aid Society Holocaust Fellowship at Oxford in 1978

Mr Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen..... I would like to begin by saying what a great privilege it is to be at this Dinner this evening and for giving me and my wife a very great experience indeed. You are a very special group of people and it is not given to all of us to celebrate with you 33 years after your liberation and coming to this country, and I thank you for enabling me to have an experience which is of a unique character, and through which we can learn something of this great traumatic event which was a formative part of your lives. In 1946 I was in charge of a Habonim Camp in this country and six of the young people who had come from the camps included your Chairman, Ben Helfgott, and I have known him ever since that time and feel for him a very great respect and affection. The work that has been done by your Society has been admirable and we all have a very high appreciation of it.

Let me say just one word about the Fellowship you are establishing. We all know that during the war an important event took place and it is impertinent for me to elaborate on this in present company. But what is forgotten is what went with that event, namely, that Jewish schools, museums, theatres, synagogues, houses of learning, were all destroyed, are all gone - finished. The whole of our culture and civilisation was wiped out virtually without trace. And so some years ago when we came to establish a Centre at Oxford one of its aims was to try to recover this loss in a tiny way, as if to raise it almost Phoenix-like out of the ashes. In the course of six years we have managed to bring to our Centre some of the most important scholars from around the world, and we have tried to bring back to life this great culture. And we feel that within the framework of what is now a Centre, there ought to be a Fellowship in Holocaust Studies with scholars of renown able to make a record and to make sure that what is in danger of being forgotten will not be forgotten.

We feel that the name of Oxford always adds prestige and we feel that Oxford, in taking over sa subject of this kind would make sure that what was a great tragedy would be shown as being worthy of being given special treatment. One can make a very strong case that one should write history ***from*** the Holocaust and work backwards. What we hope to do is to invite, year by year, a scholar of international calibre. I would like to express my very deep gratitude to the '45 Aid Society for making it possible at last to make a start on this important venture.

A VISIT TO MICHA

Carol Farkas

(Reprinted from Journal No. 6, May 1979)

Our Society continues to support MICHA in its wonderful work.

Earlier this year, whilst Frank and I were in Israel, we decided to pay a visit to the Micha Home for Deaf Children, situated in Ramat Aviv.

No doubt you all know that Micha is one of the homes to which the '45 Aid Society donates some of the money we collect at our annual reunions, and it was certainly one of the most rewarding and memorable places that we have ever visited.

When we arrived, we noticed at the entrance of the building, a few plaques inscribed with the names of the donors, and it was with great pleasure we saw the name of the '45 Aid Society.

We introduced ourselves to the Director, a very charming woman, who immediately upon hearing that we were from the '45 Aid Society, took us around the building to show us how our money was being spent. It is a very modern building, and we were very impressed with all the modern technological aids.

We went there on a Friday morning, and were shown a classroom with about twelve children, their ages ranging from about three to four years, being taught how to light the Shabbat candles and to take part in the Service. Each child was given a cup of 'wine', (which I could see they thoroughly enjoyed) and being taught to say the blessing. We were able to watch the children without being seen, as every classroom has a 2-way mirror. This is to enable to parents to watch the progress of their children, so that when the children go home the parents themselves can continue to teach them by the same method There is a microphone in each classroom so that the parents can also hear how the children are being taught.

Some classrooms are quite small, and these are used to give children individual attention. We watched one child being taught to speak by playing a game with the teacher, and when the child suddenly grasped what the teacher meant, and said a word, the teacher caught up the child in her arms and kissed her! It was amazing and really touching to see the patience and love being given to these unfortunate children. I say unfortunate, because of their disability, but they are really very lucky to have been born at a time when such advancements, and a place like Micha, are at their disposal.

We were told that about two hundred children attend these classes. The earlier a child's deafness is diagnosed and the sooner it can start to learn, the better its chances of being able to speak. We were amazed to learn that they try to start teaching babies at the age of six months!

Everyone at Micha was so pleased to see us, and asked us to thank all the members of the '45 Aid Society for the invaluable help we give.

The Auschwitz East London Exhibition
A recollection by the late RT. REV. JIM THOMPSON, BISHOP OF STEPNEY

(An article reprinted from Journal 11 Issue, 1984)

Many of our members played an active part in the exhibition by acting as guides.

It will soon be a year since the Auschwitz East London Exhibition closed. In some ways it will never close for me and other people involved in it - memories are still vivid, and perhaps will remain so as long as we live. Ben has asked me to look back and to reflect on the experience.

I suppose the opposition to the exhibition made most initial impact on me as the Chairman of the organising committee. There were many people who were against it - those who believed that such things should not be shown to children, those who said we must be sick to rake up the past, those who threatened us obscenely from amongst the contemporary British Fascists, those who thought that to put on any such exhibition was to play into the hands of Zionists and simply give moral justification to Israel's activities in Palestine, and those few Polish patriots who denied that there had been any anti-Semitism in Poland before Hitler.

But it wasn't just the direct opposition from the press and from members of the public, but also the indirect opposition through the withdrawal of support from powerful people who initially thought it was a good idea but then saw the risks involved. This was one of the pains of putting on the Auschwitz exhibition, which I came to believe reflected the inevitable sorrow involved in

looking into that pit of human despair. It was as though anyone who dared to associate with that most of terrible of human experiences was going to have virtue drained out of him. Certainly the Committee experienced both pain and conflict, caused by pressure from the outside world; and pressure within, as people wrestled with political, religious and personal differences. There was the encounter with the pain of the Polish people, not just the Jewish Poles, but the whole nation, with the recognition that so many Polish people had died, had fought the evils of Fascism with great courage, had been destroyed as families and friends through the War and occupation. There was the pain of Palestine with the tragic conflict between Israel, the surrounding nations, and the vast number of dispossessed refugees. There was also the pain in the eyes of those who had survived Auschwitz as they saw again the shocking, ordinary, mundane reminders of the nightmare of their life.

Perhaps people would say that with so much opposition and pain we should have turned back and allowed the Exhibition to return unused to store and then to Poland. But that would be to allow all the negative fears to triumph and to believe that the human race can survive and develop whilst suppressing the unpalatable part of its corporate memory. It is my belief that, looking back, we were totally right to press on and completely vindicated the reception of the Exhibition itself.

Nearly 25,000 people came, the majority of them being young people over the age of 13 and still at school. To visit the Exhibition was almost a religious experience. The vast majority of the youngsters looked, and saw, and were reflective and dignified in the way they coped with the evidence. A generation is growing up which knows amazingly little about the Holocaust. The care and preparation of the teaching pack, together with the immense commitment of teachers and schools and the education team, meant that, for the vast majority of the young who saw the Exhibition, it was a real learning experience which led them to a rejection of racism and Fascism as they saw it portrayed. Of course, there were youngsters who came ill-prepared and reacted like silly or even destructive kids - but they were the exception, not the rule - and the visitors' book with all its variety of comments reveals that overwhelmingly the memory was stirred, the understanding developed, and turned to positive wisdom.

I have recently returned from South Africa and Namibia, and the situation in those countries further vindicated my belief that Auschwitz is one of the most important assets of the human race. All those people died, there was all that suffering, and we have no right to forget it or underestimate it, but rather use it as a constant warning about the depth of the scar which runs through human-kind. To see in South Africa the law and the enforcement of the law dividing people according to variations of colour, like contours on a map, and enforcing those divisions by the cruellest opposition and oppression of those who fight them, reminds me of how ever-present the proneness to racism is in all society. To see the largely peasant people of Namibia oppressed by the iron force of South Africa, to hear of the secret interrogations and tortures, to see the power of armour, while under the total menace of a defence force and security police, all these things were a reminder of Auschwitz and a vindication for not allowing it to slip out of the human mind, for not allowing generations to grow up who do not realise the depth of evil to which human beings can sink. The control of the press and the media, the failure to bring the practises of secret police and the deeds done in the darkness to light, all these haunt me as they can lead along that dangerous road to attempted genocide.

The point of the Exhibition, in a way, is that racism and Fascism, and, I would add totalitarianism, which rides over the basic rights of citizens, are indivisible. In some nations, racism is there as an undercurrent tackled and dealt with by rational, caring people, who act to make sure that it never grows into a powerful beast; in other nations people were held back from that opposition and the beast became full-grown.

These are all solemn thoughts, and to show that even such evil in the end does not conquer the human spirit, nor defeat the ultimate purpose of God, I end with my memories of the joys associated with the Exhibition. I think of the courage, humour and humility of the survivors who showed the children round and who became our friends; I think of the moments of truth and religious awe as young people and old people looked deeper into the nature of themselves and all their brothers and sisters; I think of sharing the Passover meal with Ben and his family and mine; I think of all the support given to the Exhibition by many people both as individuals and as corporate bodies and trusts, and I think of the inoculation against Fascism which was given to all those people who viewed the Exhibition and understood. Remembrance is a key part of both the Christian and the Jewish faith and in both our faiths, remembrance is the way in which we come into the presence of God. I hope and pray that Auschwitz, in our Exhibition and in the ones which follow, will provide such encounters with love and justice that is at the heart of our universe.

RECOLLECTIONS OF THE 50TH REUNION

Howard and Elsa Chandler

(Reprinted from Journal No. 21 November 1997, page 43)

Howard Chandler (Wajchendler) came to England with the Windermere Group and subsequently emigrated to Canada. His wife Elsa will be retiring from politics at the end of the year and will be writing about the evolution of education in Toronto, as well as the development and teaching of the Holocaust Unit. Both of them are involved in Holocaust teaching.

It is hard to believe that two years have passed since the Reunion of 1995, and our memorable trip to Israel in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Liberation.

In contemplating the upcoming special Reunion of 1998, and the 50th Anniversary of the State of Israel, I decided to write some of the reminiscences of our trip.

There were 18 of us travelling from Toronto on April 29, 1995. We were a joyous and laughing group that boarded the 8:00 P.M. flight to London. On the flight there was a lot of kibitzing as we were all looking forward to seeing friends. Howard and I were particularly excited as we were rejoining our family, Harry, Doreen, their children and grandchildren.

When we arrived at their home Doreen had a second breakfast for us. The entire family soon assembled and it was wonderful to see everyone. On Saturday we relaxed for part of the day, and then Harry and Doreen, having prearranged tickets for Oliver, took us to the spectacular Palladium.

Saturday night we were invited to a reception for the "Boys" from out of town. It was wonderful to see so many whom we have not seen for a number of years - some whom Howard had not seen since Windermere. The women for the most part stayed in the background; after all it was the "Boys" get together. I knew many of the "Boys" and their families either from previous get togethers, or from their visits to Canada. It always amazes me to see the closeness, caring and camaraderie that exist even after 50 years.

On Sunday, as most of you will remember, we left by hired coach for Hyde Park for the memorial ceremonies for those who perished in the Holocaust.

An outing on one of our many visits to Israel May 1995

In attendance was the Chief Rabbi, the Israeli Ambassador, as well as other speakers, and the Children's Choir. For Howard and me it was a very impressive and moving afternoon.

Sunday night was the big "Do", the '45-Aid Society Reunion and Banquet. What a party! There were cocktails at 4:30 p.m., and dinner at 6:00 p.m. The speakers were eloquent, and their words moved many in the audience. Martin Gilbert presented us with his latest book and told us about his forthcoming book for which, at the time, he was gathering material. As you are all aware, "The Boys - Triumph Over Adversity" is now published. Since most of you by now have read it, my words are not necessary. I cannot aptly describe how important this publication is to us, and particularly to our children and grandchildren.

From the small group of survivors, we were 600 at the banquet. We came together from all corners of the globe; U.S., Canada, Zimbabwe, and Australia - many not only with wives, but also with families.

The formalities and ceremonials of the English I always find very stiff and humorous. Monday was a very significant day for the "Boys". A Torah was dedicated in a shul in a suburb of London. The scribe was a son of one of the "Boys". To complete the Torah, some of the "Boys" present added a letter. This is a very ancient custom.

After that there was dancing, food and rejoicing, as well as the official dedication of the Torah to the shul by the Emeritus Chief Rabbi, Lord Jakobovits, who spoke most appropriately. Ben Helfgott, Chairman of the '45 Aid Society, also spoke and we are grateful for his contribution to the Society.

Israel! We left for Israel on a Tuesday morning. The arrival in Israel, no matter how many times one has been there, is always very emotional. We were picked up by a bus that took us to the Moriah hotel which faces the Mediterranean.

When we arrived, the organizers presented all of us with a schedule of activities for the next few days. I don't believe we have ever properly expressed our appreciation for the work that went into organizing all the activities. People were so busy socializing, reminiscing and having a good time that we did not realize that we had arrived on the eve of the memorial to the fallen soldiers of ZAHAL I.D.I. From the time we arrived there were several sirens. It was, in fact, very eerie when all traffic stopped for a minute and all of vibrant Tel Aviv came to a complete and silent stop. Tel Aviv is the loudest city on earth and when all traffic came to a stop one could not help withholding emotions in remembrance of the beautiful boys and girls who fell in the defence of Israel.

The following day was a memorial day. It is a day of mourning. Stores are closed, and television recounts stories of personal accounts, both horrors and triumphs of war.

We, as Jews, are fortunate that no matter what catastrophes we experience we always follow with something joyous and hopeful.

Immediately after was Yom-Ha'atzmaut. This is also a state holiday. Stores are closed, and the jolly-making begins. Dancing, horn-tooting, fire crackers and the general noise is indescribable. Every car and building was bedecked with an Israeli flag. Israelis seem to know how to rejoice after mourning and remembering the tragic.

On Thursday May 4th we were invited by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem for a special concert at the Valley of the Lost Communities. We left by bus from Tel Aviv for Jerusalem, and though we were told to dress warmly, none of us was quite prepared for the cold that was both due to the weather and because we were sitting among the stones of so many vibrant lost communities. The programme consisted of speeches, a short video "The World That Was" and a concert of mostly Yiddish songs.

In our limited free time we walked the streets of Tel Aviv, visited friends and family, went to the "sook" and, in general, enjoyed the sounds of Israel, and the vibrant life around us.

Saturday evening there was a banquet for the '45-Aid Society at the Moriah Hotel. What was missing both in quality of food and lack of formality was made up by the joy of the boys being together in the state of Israel. Howard and Harry were thrilled to see Chaim Hilf and, in general, it was quite a sight to see a bunch of old men behaving like teenagers.

All in all it was a most memorable evening.

We also once again travelled to Jerusalem to Yad Vashem where the boys made a financial contribution to assist in the education of the Holocaust. We also went with friends to a special dedication of a forest that is being established with funds from the JNF.

All in all, it was a wonderfully unforgettable trip that we are looking forward to repeating in the Spring of 1998.

Come and join us. We are anxious to see you and to be together again!

We hope this time you can arrange for us to go to Habima and to hear the Israeli Philharmonic.

With best wishes for a Happy and Healthy New Year!

ADDRESS GIVEN BY BEN HELFGOTT ON THE OCCASION OF THE UNVEILING OF A MEMORIAL PLAQUE, BY LORD JAKOBOVITS, THE EMERITUS CHIEF RABBI, IN HONOUR OF THE PARENTS, OF OUR MEMBERS, WHO PERISHED DURING THE HOLOCAUST

15th December 1996

Hachnasat Torah Borehamwood at Elstree Synagogue

About a year before the 50th anniversary of our liberation when we were discussing plans how to commemorate this event, one of our committee members, Isroel Rudzinski, suggested that we dedicate a Sefer Torah to the memory of our parents who were killed in the Shoa. In addition, a plaque inscribed with the names of our parents was to be placed in a synagogue where the Sefer Torah would find a home. Most of the committee members accepted with alacrity the second suggestion, but there were some doubters about the dedication of the Sefer Torah. However, Isroel Rudzinski had set his mind on this project, to him this was a sacred task, and supported by Solly Irving managed to persuade the waverers on the committee to go ahead with this scheme. Those who were present in May last year at the Hachnasat Torah and watched our members completing the last letters in the Torah, supervised by the young Sofer who was the son of one of the 'Boys', Moshe Kuszmierski, found the occasion very moving and poignant. The exuberance and joy that prevailed during the Hakofos was a scene that none of us will ever forget. The timelessness of the Torah with all its splendour and tradition was there for all of us to witness. Thea and Isroel Rudzinski, as well as Solly Irving, were beaming with satisfaction and fulfilment, as were all those who were present. The atmosphere was electric and contagious; we all felt that we were participating in an event that our parents and our ancestors gloried in for centuries. It was a confirmation of our unshakeable faith that in spite of the attempts by evil people to destroy us through the course of history "Am Israel Hai".

In a way our Society is a microcosm of our community and the Jewish people at large, representing a wide spectrum of religious, political and social diversity. We often have our differences but we are aware that we have in common the covenant of shared history 'Brit Goral'. We are conscious of the fact that the Nazis did not differentiate between secular and religious Jews. It is a lesson we learned, remember and try to apply in our daily life. Tolerance and understanding towards one another and to our fellow man is foremost in our minds.

I return to today's event which is of a different nature from last year when we were rejoicing. Today's occasion is one of solemnity. Our parents were killed in the gas chambers, in the woods, in the ravines and marshes, on the death marches and in all sorts of unimaginable places. They have disappeared like the wind and we have no Matzevah for them. This plaque, that was unveiled by Lord Jakobovits and to whom we are very grateful for accepting our invitation to officiate and making this event very meaningful to us, will be our collective Matzevah. It is here, in this synagogue that we will be able to come once a year and say collective Kaddish to the memory of our parents who were killed so prematurely and who did not see us grow up and, unlike most other parents, could not share with us our joy and sorrow and derive 'naches' from us. Our children, too, will know that there is a place where the names of their grandparents are honoured.

On behalf of our members I would like to thank the Hon. Officers of the Elstree and Borehamwood Synagogue and especially Rabbi Plancey who spoke so eloquently today and at last year's Hahnasat Torah and who was so supportive and encouraged us with this project.

Launch of the book "THE BOYS" Triumph Over Advesity

(Reprinted from Journal 20, December 1996, page 51)

The publication of The Boys - Triumph over Adversity was a momentous event for our members. The launch of the book on Wednesday 9th October at the Great Hall in King's College was extremely well attended and supported by the second generation as well as many of our friends. Rachel and Chaim Liss, Nechema and Menachem Silberstein, Sarah and Menachem Waksztok came specially from Israel for this event, as did Phyllis and Maurice Vegh from New York. It was a very moving and unforgettable occasion.

The book was widely and favourably reviewed and many articles were written about the Boys in various newspapers. Below are a few extracts from some of the reviews.

"This is a book about coming out of hell, about great evil, about the triumph of the human spirit and about great goodness on the part of those who helped. One is left with hope and admiration."

Julia Neuberger - The Times

"In collating their stories, Martin Gilbert has created an entirely new archive of previously unrecorded Holocaust recollections. The results combine to create one of the most remarkable testaments of human hope and endurance, recovery, companionship and generosity of spirit you could ever read. It is their eloquent collective voice that gives this book its remarkable force.... Most moving of all though is their sense of modesty, they are - like Primo Levi - witnesses, just witnesses, and never presume to judge."

Ruth Cowen - Ham & High

"Martin Gilbert's book is both moving and reassuring and his subtitle, Triumph over Adversity, sums it up nicely... Gilbert, perhaps wisely, avoids any long excursions into sociology or psychopathology and lets his story speak for itself, but if one needs proof that one can suffer every handicap and adversity without declining into parasitism or depravity, it is to be found in the pages of this remarkable book."

Chaim Bermant - The Scotsman

"It is customary these days to think that those who have been on the receiving end of violence as young people can be forgiven for being violent in later life. Here of all places - that is not the case.... Their dignified bearing, their lack of anger, their normality, place them among the towering moral figures of our century."

James Blitz - Financial Times

"This is the story of human beings sucked into a vortex of destruction in which family, identity, religion and culture were all ripped away. A sense of near miraculous calm descends when the Boys finally arrive in Britain, when human fortitude finally prevails over absolute evil."

Professor David Cesarani - Times Literary Supplement

"This is an important book. There was a Holocaust.... Sometimes one encounters people who ask about the Holocaust: Did it really happen? Was it really that bad? Anyone confused by lingering doubts should read this book."

Patrick Skene Catling - The Spectator

"Martin Gilbert is to be congratulated on producing a masterly and deeply moving tribute to those who had the courage and luck to survive. This should be required reading. Through the horror of these pages.... there shines the determination of the human spirit to soldier on and ultimately to triumph in the face of the most extreme adversity imaginable."

Winston Churchill M.P. - Literary Review

"It is, as a further, indisputable, record of Nazi cruelty, as a series of testimonials to endurance and resourcefulness, full of arresting and memorable details that The Boys has to be read."

Caroline Moorehead - Daily Telegraph

This is not just another book about the Holocaust, in Martin Gilbert's words it is about 'the human capacity for hope and renewal'."

Anita Lasker-Wallfisch - The Sunday Telegraph

"In a year of gloomy books and gloomier events Martin Gilbert has given us, The Boys; Triumph over Adversity, a masterpiece of decency and courage and joy which describes what happened to the 732 young concentration camp survivors taken in by Britain. 'We were amongst the beasts' one wrote 'and I am proud to declare that we upheld the dignity of man'. Superb."

John Simpson's choice of his book of the year in the Daily Telegraph, Saturday 30th November 1996.

POSTBAG FROM "THE BOYS" TRIUMPH OVER ADVERSITY

(Reprinted from Journal November 1997, pages 72, 73, 74)

The publication of "The Boys" Triumph Over Adversity brought in a spate of letters, some of which are included in this issue.

30th May 1997

Dear Mr Helfgott,

This letter has been for three months awaiting both content and postage, and at the outset, I offer my sincerest apologies for any offence or intrusion which may be felt by my decision to write to you.

The motivation for my correspondence comes as a result of Martin Gilbert's book, `The Boys', which I read earlier this year. At once, I wanted to write to you - write to each and every one of the `Boys' - but felt humble, almost unworthy of your time. What would I write? How does one convey on paper the feelings one has when reading of your experiences?

I do not pretend to empathise. The Holocaust is, I feel, the darkest time in all human history; suffering and devastation on a scale so vast that it tears at the very source of comprehension. That yourself and the `Boys' have chosen to record the tragedies of your youth can only be saluted. Your experiences will remain forever a testimony to your families and loved ones. You are an essential voice of silent millions, and the courage and strength which the `Boys' clearly share can only be respected and admired.

My daughter, aged nine, recently had to write a piece of non-fiction as a part of her schoolwork. Whilst her peers chose pets, holidays and trips to the cinema, my daughter, Kate - entirely of her own accord - studied and wrote a piece on the Holocaust. Her Headteacher subsequently read this work to the whole school, of which many pupils were totally unaware of the events of nearly sixty years ago.

That people like yourselves choose to share your most harrowing and personal experiences with others ensures that the tragedies of your lives will remain forever in the minds and consciences of future generations. Certainly, my own children will always be made aware and taught never to forget, something which will in turn, I am sure, be passed on to my children's children.

Mr Helfgott, from the bottom of my soul, I salute you and every one of the `Boys' and I wish yourselves and your families a very long, healthy and happy life.

Yours most sincerely,

Ms Amanda J Jenkins (Aged 29)

17.2.97

Dear Mr Helfgott,

I am writing to tell you that I have just finished reading Mr Gilbert's book entitled "The Boys'. I am a 72 year old pensioner and probably a similar age to many of you who survived all the horrors which the Nazis inflicted on all of you, your parents and your families. I have lived through the whole story (in my mind) and have wondered what I was doing during the time when you were all receiving such horrific treatment.

From your happy childhood days with loving parents and sisters and brothers, through to the days when Poland was invaded, the Ghettos, the deportations, the camps, the selection process, the labour camps and finally the death marches, followed by liberation and the flights to England.

My home town is Morecambe in Lancashire where one of your Windermere boys found his brother. Those of you who landed at Crosby in Eden and were located in the Windermere hostels were in a place where I have spent many happy hours as it is only about an hour by car from Morecambe. I also played cricket there for my ICI works team.

I was pleased to follow the progress of all of you as you received education and eventually succeeded in business and formed your own families. I can understand the comradeship which developed and which has remained to this day.

Going back to 1945 when you all belonged to each other and when this everlasting bond was formed.

I am pleased for you all.

During my retirement I have been reading many books

Down Memory Lane


KAMIEŃSK
WOLBÓRZ
PRZYGŁÓW
SULEJÓW
KLESZCZÓW
RZEWICA
GIELNIÓW
PARADYZ
ZARNÓW
SKRZYNNO
PRZYSUCHA
ZEDBÓRZ
DOSZYCE

regarding the behaviour of your persecutors because, like so many of you, I ask WHY, WHY, WHY!

Recently I read "HITLER'S WILLING EXECUTIONERS" which told how there was never any shortage of people to carry out the atrocities. I try to think of what your parents told you all - not to hate or seek revenge, but when one is so aware of what they did, it is not easy to be like that.

I am not a Jew, I was brought up in a Christian family and attended a Congregational Church in Morecambe, but to me, PEOPLE ARE PEOPLE and are all worthy of respect and fair treatment.

I hope my letter finds you because I just wanted you to know I had read your stories and was aware of what you all went through.

Yours sincerely,

Harry Swarbrick

CORRESPONDENCE FROM ANN CHUTER

23.11.96

Dear Sir,

The enclosed letter I sent to the Daily Mail after reading the article on `The Boys', written by Mr Paul Harris, but was returned. I do wonder if you have any information regarding this matter. Thanking you.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Chuter (nee Brough)

Dear Sir,

I read with interest your article on October 12th 1996 about `The Boys', Polish Jewish evacuees, who were sent to Britain, and eventually, to Windermere in 1945, at the end of the war.

At the time I was living at Calgarth, in Windermere, an estate purposely built for the workers of Short Bros. who were building Flying Boats during the war. `The Boys' were given the Single mens billets on this estate. At the time I too was a teenager, as many of these boys were, we made lots of friends during these months we took them to the pictures, went for walks on the fells, and many things your article mentioned. The language barrier was difficult at first, but we soon overcame it, and began to understand one another very well. I remember these 4 months very clearly, and over the last 50 years I have often wondered what had happened to them all.

I made a particular friend called Izak Pomerance, who eventually left for London and Belsize Park, in 1945. We corresponded for quite a long time, and met once or twice when I came down South to live, but sad to say we lost touch over time.

I wondered if you could put me in touch with someone who would know what happened to him, did he stay in Britain? or go back to Poland? I would be grateful for any information you could give me. It was rather a coincidence, as I read your article in the Daily Mail, I was travelling to Windermere to visit relatives.

Yours sincerely,

Ann Chuter (nee Brough)

Opening of the exhibition "THE BOYS" Triumph Over Adversity

The Jewish Museum, 80 East End Road, London N3

An exhibition about our members, entitled "Children who Survived the Holocaust" was opened at the Jewish Museum - London's Museum of Jewish Life, on Sunday 17th November 1996. The exhibition includes photographs, documents and objects relating to the lives of our members. These date from before and during the War and from the period of "The Boys" liberation and early days in Britain, with an accompanying text telling our story. The idea to hold this exhibition came from the Director of the Museum, Rickie Burman, and was sponsored by our Society. The exhibition will be available as a travelling display at schools and organisations and it will form part of the Museum's active programme of Holocaust education.

The exhibition was reviewed by Helen Jacobus in the Jewish Chronicle in which she stated "that it is a painstakingly compiled and clearly explained exhibition which cannot fail to absorb anyone who attends." We are grateful to Rickie Burman, Carol Siegel and the staff of the Jewish Museum for putting on this exhibition.

THE LIBERTY FRATERNITY

(Reprinted from The Times Magazine, January 11th 1997)
Erica Wagner, Literary Editor of The Times

Number 27 Belsize Park Road is an ordinary house on an ordinary street. A very nice house on a very nice street, in point of fact, but not one that seems distinguished in any particular way from its neighbours. But that's not quite true.

In 1947, 27 Belsize Park Road, in north-west London, was first a hostel for 32 boys and then the home of the Primrose Club. Kopel Kendall's eyes are lit with delight when he recalls the place that was so much more than just another youth club.

"The club wasn't just a club; it was a home. We used to meet there six days a week, a lot of us coming straight from work. We had the finest instructors, in ballroom dancing up to the standard of silver and gold, five football teams....."

"Table tennis," interjects Harry Balsam. "Do you remember? We had a national champion to teach us table tennis, and speakers every Friday night. Moshe Sharett (Prime Minister of Israel, 1954-55) came to speak to us."

"We were so keen," says Kendall. "If you played football for Primrose and you lost a game, you wouldn't show your face on a Sunday night because you'd let the club down. It was really something wonderful."

Kendall and Balsam are in their late sixties. Both greying, both a little balding, but both full of an energy that fills the small library of the synagogue across the street from the old Primrose Club. I met them, and two more old members, Ben Helfgott and Harry Spiro, on the street corner just across from No. 27; I arrived early, and watched these four men meet and embrace with the kind of warmth, affection - and remorseless teasing - seen only between the closest of brothers. And brothers, despite their lack of blood relation, is what these men truly are.

Helfgott, Kendall, Balsam and Spiro are four of "The Boys" - as they still call themselves. They make up a group of Holocaust survivors who came to this country in the immediate aftermath of the war, brought on the initiative of Leonard Montefiore, chairman of the Committee for the Care of Children from the Concentration Camps, an arm of the Central British Fund (now World Jewish Relief).

As the Second World War ended, the Central British Fund had sought permission from the Home Office to bring some of the orphaned children who had been in concentration camps to Britain. The Home Office gave its consent to 1,000 children under the age of 16 to be granted entry, although only 732 could be found. Britain was to be a stepping stone to lives further afield; most, it was assumed, would move on, perhaps to Palestine.

As it happened, nearly half the number remained in this country, becoming pillars of the Jewish community; the late Rabbi Hugo Gryn was one of their number. The Primrose Club was but one of the schemes devised by Montefiore and others involved with the Fund to help the Boys adjust to their new lives.

Sir Martin Gilbert has now told their story in his book *The Boys: Triumph Over Adversity.* Friendly with Gryn for more than 20 years, Gilbert has been attending the Boys' reunions for the past 18 and has been president of their association, the '45 Aid Society, since 1988. His book is a labour of love.

Recounted through the vivid testimony of the Boys themselves - there were girls among them, but not many, as they were less likely to survive the camps - the book is a remarkable account of much more than the horror of the Holocaust.

The Boys' accounts bring to life the vanished world of Polish and Hungarian Jewry before the war; a world of close communities, happy families and great learning. They make real the struggle to come to terms with a new life in a strange country, to succeed against the greatest of odds.

Although the book's author is Gilbert, its true genesis lies with Helfgott. Born in Pabjanice, Poland, in 1929, when war came he, along with his parents and his sisters Mala and Lusia, was confined in the Piotrkow ghetto. His mother and Lusia were executed in 1942; separated from his father in 1944 in Buchenwald, he was sent to Schlieben slave-labour camp. Only he and Mala survived the war.

Helfgott is the chairman of the '45 Aid Society. He is a small, thickset man - it is no surprise to learn he was a British weightlifting champion, competing in the 1956 Melbourne Olympics, the 1960 Rome Olympics and the Commonwealth Games in Cardiff in 1958 - whose cheerful demeanour and seemingly inexhaustible fund of energy belie an innate seriousness.

He is, says Balsam, "a walking encyclopaedia" on the Boys, and all agree that it was his urging, his desire to have the Boys tell their stories, that brought the book into being. But it wasn't easy to get them to tell their

tales; the book's existence is testimony to his persistence.

"It's one thing when you meet someone and you're confronted with questions that you have to answer," Helfgott says. "It's another thing to be able to collect one's thoughts and then to write. The majority of us had stopped our education when war broke out in 1939; we lost six years of schooling. When we came to England, we learnt some English and some maths and history, but very soon we went out to work. We wanted to be independent. Most thought it was beyond them, but I knew this was not the case, that everybody can write, especially if he has a story to tell."

Lack of education, however, wasn't the only obstacle. "It's the same as going back to Poland," Helfgott continues. He has been back a number of times. "One is so far away from it. It's been so many years. One is afraid of what one is going to find there.

"But once one has returned, one discovers that the anxiety was unfounded and wonders why one was waiting so many years to face the past. Because one learns a great deal about oneself if one is confronted with the reality of where one comes from.

"Those who thought they'd never be able to write anything suddenly discovered that they could do so - it was quite an exciting revelation. They are all intelligent people. If the war hadn't broken out, they would have had a very good education - one more thing that was lost because of the war."

Kendall nods. He was born in Bialobrzegi, Poland, in 1928 as Kopel Kandelcukier. Along with 300 other Boys, at the end of the war he was evacuated from a displaced-persons camp in Theresienstadt to Prague and then finally, in August 1945, to Britain.

These first Boys were taken initially to Windermere in the Lake District; Kendal took his new name from nearby Kendal. Married for 40 years to Vivienne and about to retire from a successful clothing business, he shakes his head as he recalls trying to get his story down on paper.

"My wife helped me to write it, and every time we sat down, after five minutes we nearly had a divorce because it's not easy to put down what you've gone through.

"And so to make up, I'd have to buy Vivienne either a mink coat or a diamond ring, and Martin Gilbert wrote me back a lovely letter when I finally sent him my story. He wrote: "Thank you very much Kopel - but at least now Vivienne is very well kitted out!"

The Boys is Gilbert's fiftieth book and it is, he says, very different from all the others. It is a "collective biography", written from the accounts the Boys themselves sent him, and supplemented by correspondence. He eventually built up a collection of about 500 letters.

"Their stories were their stories," he says. "I tried to encourage them to fill the gaps. What was quite unusual was that there really wasn't much need to - there were none that couldn't be published because they might be in any way embarrassing to the people concerned, although some are very personal.

"It is their story in the raw. I felt my main task was to encourage them to tell their stories without feeling any inhibitions; because very few of them had written anything before. I felt they did that. They weren't writing with a view to it being published; I was amazed at how open and direct some of the things were that they wrote."

It is little wonder that the stories were not easy to tell. Most of the Boys were imprisoned in slave-labour camps such as Schlieben in Germany and Skarzysko-Kamienna in Poland. Skarzysko-Kamienna, one of the most notorious camps, was an armaments factory run throughout the war by a German company based in Leipzig. Hugo Schneider Aktiengesellschaft. About 24,000 Jews were sent there during the war; more than two-thirds of the total population - up to 17,000 people - perished there. Balsam, who arrived at the camp in 1943 from Plaszow, survived - and it was there that he encountered Kendall.

"When I arrived at Skarzysko-Kamienna, I saw a person sitting in a corner with a little fire and two bricks, and I'm looking at the person and I can't see anybody," Balsam recalls, laughing. Born in Gorlice in 1929, he was separated from his mother, sister and one of his brothers during one of the ghetto deportations in August 1942; he never saw them again. After the war, he began in the menswear business with Spiro but soon branched out on his own, at one time running 11 shops in and around London.

"Kendall was black, filthy dirty black; I thought he was a black man, and I'd never seen one before. But he was black from the soot, sitting making coffee and selling it for a piece of bread. I went over to him and I said, 'Will you sell me some coffee?' And he said, 'What will you give me for it?' I said, 'I've got nothing to give you.' And he said, 'You can't get any coffee, then.'"

Hearing the story again, Kendall laughs too, rocking back in his chair and wiping his eyes - but his tears, it is plain, are not from laughter alone. "My God," he says, "I'm nearly crying - it's so strange - Harry thought I was a black man when he met me; when I met Ben

(Helfgott) in 1945, he saw me as a Chinese - because I was yellow."

Helfgott had arrived at Schlieben from Buchenwald in 1944. Schlieben, too, was an armaments factory, and Kendall had been working there making anti-tank weapons; the poisonous chemicals had turned his skin yellow. "The Germans wore protective clothing, but we didn't, so we were yellow and the food tasted bitter. The first time I saw Ben, he asked me how long I had been in the camp and I said, three years - and he's saying to himself, well, if you could survive..."

"When we arrived from Buchenwald in December 1944 and we saw these people, we almost passed out," says Helfgott. "I've never seen human beings in such an appalling state."

"When they arrived," says Kendall in his deliberate, matter-of-fact way - his voice, like the voices of all of them, is still accented by his native Polish, "it was soup time, and soup time was a gamble every day. Sometimes the *kapo* who was dishing it out gave someone a full ladle and the others a little bit less - there were usually two or three people at the end shouting and screaming and crying. Some soup spilled on the floor and we were licking it up. And this young man," he says, grinning at Helfgott, "was looking at us and thinking, "How can people live this that?"

But strong bonds are formed in such awful conditions. Balsam and Spiro's business partnership had its beginnings on the 1945 death march from Rehmsdort to Theresienstadt. Three thousand set off, only 600 arrived.

Taking cover from an Allied air raid in a field, Spiro found some beetroot, which he hid in his shirt. But he was spotted by another boy, who threatened to reveal his secret if he didn't get a share; it was only when Spiro threatened the boy with a knife that he was left alone. Balsam was the boy, and that encounter was the unlikely start of a 50-year friendship.

It seems extraordinary that tales like this can be told with laughter, even with joy. Joy suffuses the room during our conversation, almost palpable in the air as the glad shouts of children in a nearby schoolyard drift in through the open window.

It is a feeling that seems only to be made stronger by the sorrow of loss that underlies it. What makes the stories of these men remarkable is the strength that they were able to draw from each other, both in the camps and then later in England.

All four of these Boys lived together in a hostel in Loughton. In the initial evacuations, some of the boys had been flown to Windermere, where they were housed in accommodation built by the Ministry of Aircraft Productions; hundreds of other Boys flew from Munich, in November 1945, to Southampton, where they were housed in Wintershill Hall, a lovely old house lent for the purpose by its owner. But these were temporary arrangements for the Boys' gradual introduction to a "normal" life; by the early days of 1946, the Boys had been scattered throughout the country in hostels to continue their education and learn a trade.

That they should be kept together in hostels was the notion of Dr Oscar Friedmann. A pre-war refugee from Germany, Friedmann had been sent to an orphanage in Berlin at the age of ten, and knew first-hand the perils of life in institutions.

In1938, he brought a large number of German Jewish children to Britain, where he remained, committing himself to caring for the mental health of wartime refugees. The hostels made for a "family life" that supported the Boys far better than the real family they sometimes found.

"After two years, I found family in this country I never knew I had," says Balsam. "At the time, I was living in the hostel in Loughton. They were very excited because I was the only member of the family who had survived the concentration camps in Poland and they immediately wanted to take me into their house. And I went there - for one night. I ran away. I came back to the hostel."

"Most probably they didn't want him," Spiro says slyly.

"That's correct," Balsam jokes. "But you see what I'm getting at. As much as they wanted me, I wasn't happy with the family. I wanted to come back to the hostel."

But hostel accommodation could not be provided forever. Friedmann knew that the Boys had to move on. "He knew that he had to be kind and that he had to be hard," says Helfgott. "He knew that in the initial stages, food and education had to be provided, but the next step in our rehabilitation was to learn a trade."

"He didn't want us to stay too long in the hostels because then we would become institutionalised. But he was also aware that once we lived in digs, we would lose contact with each other and this would result in a kind of loneliness, and loneliness could lead to depression. That is how the idea of the club came about."

The club's great success was due in large part - almost entirely, if you listen to the Boys, although he himself is more modest - to the involvement of Paul Yogi Mayer, a pre-war refugee youth leader from Germany who had served in the Special Operations Executive during the war. Mayer had gone

on to work with the Brady Boys' Club in the East End of London, and was brought in to help the Boys by Friedmann and his committee. Mayer's approach was caring but briskly practical.

"I never spoke to the boys about their pasts, and they didn't want to talk about their pasts," Mayer says now. At 84 he seems as vigorous as ever, and the Boys confirm he has hardly changed since they first knew him.

"I was only interested to link them up with the normal life of young people in this country. At first the committee wanted their money only to be spent on the Boys and not on other children, but I said if I don't get other youngsters to come in, I cannot do the job. We need other young people to give them a normal life."

As a consequence, other boys and, importantly, girls - hence the dancing lessons - were brought into the club. Helfgott points proudly to at least 20 marriages that resulted from this.

The club opened formally on July 6, 1947, and ran until the mid-fifties, later in a house in Finchley Road owned by the Jewish Youth Fund. "It was a normal kind of club," Mayer says. "You could come and sit and read the paper, have a meal." He laughs. "You should have seen the size of the portions.

"Ben was from the beginning the leader. He's remained the leader for over 40 years."

"The Primrose Club was terribly important to them," Gilbert says. Mayer's work, he adds, was invaluable. "He pushed them forward into a competitive world, as sportsmen, as competitors, to be equal to their equivalents in the world of football or fencing or swimming. That was a very remarkable psychological insight.

"He understood that one had to build a new life, in part because he had himself been a refugee from Nazism, but more I think because of his own character. Of course they had counsellors they could speak to, to deal with their past, but he said 'try and do it this way' - out on the sports field. And that really did work."

Mayer stresses the fine behaviour of the boys. The title of my piece, he says, should be "Boys became Men". "They were anxious to build up a decent life; and they rejected anything they felt was indecent, of that world they had seen - that was the darkness. And that is quite amazing.

"The only fighting we ever had was when we played football on Hampstead Heath and they lost. They beat up the other team. I was furious about it; and they said to me, 'We can't take any losses any more.' But that was the last of the fighting." Mayer is still deeply involved with the Boys, and still calls Helfgott "Benjamin my son".

It is impossible to pretend that the experiences of the Boys - in the ghettos, in the labour camps, on the death marches - haven't left marks. "Outwardly, we are very happy people," says Kendall. "But even after all these years, when you see a film or read the paper - you get the odd nightmare. Now and again you get to a point where you feel you want to die, you feel very emotional. I don't think anything will ever cure me of that."

And yet the story of the Boys is one not only of survival and success but of the ability of the human spirit to remain magnanimous in the most awful of circumstances. As the war ended, many of the boys were given the opportunity to take revenge on their tormentors; none of them, so far as anyone knows, took it. Survival - not revenge, not despair - was all that was important to these children during the long years of their suffering.

Harry Spiro was the only one of his family to survive the war. His mother, father and sister were deported from Piotrkow in October, 1942, and he never saw them again. Just before the deportations began, his mother pushed him from the house with the words, "At least let one of our family survive." Spiro is still in awe of her strength of will, and sees his family - three children and nine grandchildren - as his victory over Hitler.

Recently he returned to Prague with a group of survivors who were liberated from Theresienstadt; a few Jews who had been born in England came along on the trip. "At one place, the guide showed us a gas chamber, and told everyone what had happened - to us, the survivors, it didn't mean much, but the English people, they were crying with the trauma. One of them came over to me and said, "Tell me, Harry - you were there; did you ever think of committing suicide?" And I looked at him and said, 'What are you talking about? It never entered my mind.' He couldn't understand it, and said 'Oh, you must have seen the light at the end of the tunnel.' I said, 'No, I didn't even know what that meant at the time. It was just a matter of another day, and another fight to survive.'"

Evil, Helfgott says, did not infect them. "We had a taste of what a normal life was. We had wonderful parents who cared for us, we lived in a wonderful atmosphere full of love for one another - it was really a beautiful life. When the war came, all we saw around us was evil; we were repelled by it."

This family life, lost forever in the war, was in a sense reconstructed by the Boys among themselves and their new families, a bulwark of strength and happiness in a new world. Rabbi Hugo Gryn's daughter

Naomi says that growing up with the Boys was like "growing up with the most phenomenal collection of uncles - the bond between us is so strong you can't imagine it. They reconstituted a family between them and they are the most zestful, life-affirming people on the planet. They aren't victims - my father brought his seed to this country and met my wonderful mother to replant his tree. The victims are those who have died; we are not victims."

And indeed, attending a party held at King's College, London, to celebrate the book's publication was like taking part in a stupendous family reunion. About 150 of the Boys were there, along with their wives, their children and grandchildren - Hugo Gryn was much missed, but his widow Jaqui and his son David and daughter Rachelle were there; Yogi Mayer was there, as was Thelma Marcus, who, with her late husband Solly, took over from him as club leader.

The speeches started late because so many books had been presold that Gilbert was about two hours signing them all. The room was filled with warmth and light and embracing; with love for dear ones seen often and love that comes at reunion.

Three Boys - Menachem Waksztok, Menachem Silberstein and Chaim Liss, with their wives - made the trip from Israel to be there. It was a gathering that spanned years and generations, and drew into its joy even outsiders like myself.

The story of the Holocaust is a story of horror and terror, of man's inhumanity to man on such a scale as to dwarf the imagination. But here was the evidence that this story had another side, not merely of survival but of triumph. Harry Spiro's mother, deported and destroyed 54 years ago, has surely won her battle.

"Few people have endured as much as we did," Helfgott said to his devoted audience that night, "But we have not allowed Hitler to have a posthumous victory."

"The book, our story, is pour encourager les autres. People need to read it, because every day there is someone who feels helpless, feels a need for support. The best way to do it is to find out how other people coped. Now, if we, who have experienced such terrible atrocities, were able to cope and come out of it with an increased zest for life, then anybody else should be able to do it, too. I hope that this is the message that comes over in this book."

COLLECTIVE BARMITZVAH AT ORT

Ben Helfgott

(Reprinted from Journal No. 22, Autumn 1998, page 73)

Last year some of our members participated in the launch, by World ORT, of a remarkable CD Rom programme called "Navigating the Bible". It enables those who prepare for their Barmitzvah to find their relevant portion in the Bible and to study and explore the Torah in the most modern and easy way, using the latest technology.

Many of our members, unfortunately, were unable to celebrate their Bar Mitzvah as it usually coincided with the deportations to the gas chambers or lived under conditions of extreme deprivation. They also never found out what Sidrah related to their Bar Mitzvah.

The CD Rom launch was both an opportunity for some of them to participate in a collective Bar Mitzvah and to find their own portion which was conducted by the same Chazan who sang the whole Torah and Haftoreh so beautifully for the programme and for ORT to demonstrate the value and importance of this project.

Those who participated in the collective Bar Mitzvah were: Abe Dichter, Ben Helfgott, Zigi Shipper, Harry Spiro, Krulik Wilder, Ray Wino (Winogrodzki), Harry Ziskind and Zvi Dagan (Mlynarski), who came specially from Israel.

It was a very moving occasion and as the Director of ORT said - "It went just a little way to making up for what the "Boys" missed in those terrible years of horror."

Some of the 'The Boys' who participated at their collective Barmitzvah at Ort

SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS - YOUR INFLUENCE ON MY LIFE

By Barbara Barnett

(Reprinted from Journal No. 24, page 4, Autumn 2000)

Dear Friends,

Your editor has asked me to think back over the years since first we met and share some of my recollections with you. This mental exercise has provoked all sorts of random incidents, information and impressions to come tumbling back into my mind. With some difficulty I have attempted to make some sort of sense of them.

My first knowledge of your existence was in the winter of 1946. Someone, I do not recall who, approached me at Lauderdale Road Synagogue and asked if I would visit young survivors of the Camps who had just reached London. He made the same request on the same occasion to Richard Barnett, then simply a family friend. I demurred initially. I had recently returned from 5 years in Canada, first at school then in the Royal Canadian Air Force. I was an undergraduate on a Social Science course at LSE. What had I to offer? Richard, 16 years my senior, was an excellent linguist, widely travelled and a gifted historian. He had been on active service in RAF Intelligence in the Middle East. He suggested we visit the Shelter together and find out more. That decision had a profound impact on the rest of our lives.

We learned some facts: that the British government had agreed to offer 1,000 child survivors, under 16 years old, temporary visas to the UK. The proviso was that the Jewish community took full responsibility for them until they were rehabilitated overseas, and ensured that none became a financial liability on the state. The Jewish Refugee Committee had accepted this undertaking and then set up the CCC, the Committee for the Care of Children from the Camps, with Leonard Montefiore in the chair. No-one more caring, capable and discerning could have been selected for that sensitive position.

Richard and I introduced ourselves at the Jews' Temporary Shelter in the East End of London. There we met the boys in one dormitory and the girls in another, the rooms crammed with beds separated by small lockers. It was strangely quiet, the only sound occasional humming or snatches of song. We went round shaking hands in an attempt to make some contact. The language barrier was formidable. Richard decided it would be unacceptable to you to speak in German.

You were all teenagers, mostly from that part of Hungary that had been Czechoslovakia. You had chosen to come here as a first step to *aliyah* - or to joining relatives elsewhere. You spent your first few months at the Shelter in Mansell Street. I wonder what impression it made on you! It was a typically Victorian institution, solidly built but gaunt and forbidding. There you were surrounded by rows of shabby terraced houses and tenement buildings dotted with derelict bomb sites, scars from World War II. This is the area where refugees and impoverished immigrants had arrived from the London Docks during centuries past and in the last hundred years or so Jewish groups had also settled and established their own synagogues, schools and community centres there. The London Blitz was Hitler's attempt to demoralise the people and flatten the city. Both aims failed. The people relocated and the city was slowly recovering when you arrived.

We were told you needed help and encouragement in learning the language, introductions to local Jewish families and guidance in adapting to living in London. We were at a loss. How could we get to know you when there seemed no point of contact? I was ashamed of my ignorance of Jewish life in the Diaspora; or even about Palestine. There were no Zionist Youth Groups in our community. Slowly some information had reached us in Canada about the concentration camps but only after D-Day came ghastly reports of the findings by Allied forces. My cousin died from a disease caught in that task - he was 19.

Once you people had mastered some English - and how rapidly you did so! - Richard invited a few at a time to spend an evening drawing and painting at his flat in Shepherd's Market. Wilfred Sloane, his RAF colleague, a gifted artist, provided paper, brushes and paint to be used freely; and Richard played classical records in the background. Of course, I produced refreshments, but they

must have been very simple as we still had strict rationing. We never knew who would turn up on these occasions. It took some time before you trusted us. Magda and her cousin Rosina were among the first to do so.

The next stage found you reaching major decisions. The CBF counsellors worked with you one by one to discover your ambitions and lead you through what options they could find; to study and make up for lost schooling, to learn a trade, or to find a job. There were limits. The British economy had been drained by the war and you were competing for work and training alongside ex-servicemen. Many of you were disappointed with what was available. Later on, when Artur Poznanski had a rough time, Richard helped him find more congenial work; they came together as you would guess through their enjoyment of music.

As decisions were reached, lodgings were sought for each of you, usually a room in a private house with a Jewish landlady. This meant you would be isolated, living alone, or sometimes with a friend, and losing the firm support and deep-rooted solidarity that had built up with the others. No-one else could be expected to understand what you had been through or what your life once was. So the Primrose Club was established in Belsize Park to provide a meeting place and a social centre. It proved a brilliant idea that was developed by Yogi Mayer, the very experienced and indefatigable leader, to become an outstanding success. You flocked there from your widely scattered digs. Every evening offered a growing variety of activities; there was a canteen and a small hostel. You were expected to sign up for some regular group, otherwise you could come and go as you liked. You excelled in sports. At inter-club competitions Primrose teams became famous. Locally-born young people applied to join and Yogi encouraged this.

We came to meet you there regularly. Richard brought records and introduced musical appreciation sessions. These became very popular. For some it was a first discovery of classical music, a newly found leisure pursuit with strong appeal; while for others powerful memories were evoked of music enjoyed in their childhood homes before all hell was let loose. Through art and music, people can find expression without any language barrier. Once that barrier disappeared, I had added weekly play-reading; and later on we performed Emlyn Williams' grim tale, *Night Must Fall* at St Peter's Church Hall in Belsize Square. Do you remember Chaim Liss as the leading man? Hugo Gryn took part, too; I came to know him well over the years. Nowadays art and music and drama are recognised as valued outlets for self-expression We did not know that then.

In June 1947, I was required to decide where to focus my studies. With Richard's encouragement I applied for professional training in Child Welfare. My involvement with you had made a profound impact on me and contributed to my making this choice. I have worked in and around this field, here and in Israel, ever since. It was only when I started to live and work in Israel in 1974 and came to know Jewish people from far and wide that I realised how unusual was Anglo-Jewry, and how very strange and hard it must have been for you to adapt to life in London.

Richard and I had become engaged in November 1947 and married in July 1948. Our activities with you all had led to our spending more and more time together. The Girls announced that they were responsible for our marriage and there was some truth in that! Once we had our own home, first in Belsize Park, then higher up the hill, we were able to welcome a few of you there, often to share our Friday evenings. A few names and a few occasions I remember well, but I plead with those people and happenings omitted here to accept my apologies and know that I have warm feelings for you all. So many of you I continue to meet at '45 Aid Society gatherings and lectures and on other occasions are familiar from those early days, like Michael Etkind, Roman Halter, Jerry Herzberg and Koppel Kendal; but I have reached an age when, to my great embarrassment, names frequently escape me.

Magda came to tell us she was leaving for New York with her cousin Rosina and her husband Sam, another of the Boys, and their baby daughter. We arranged to hold a farewell party for her and her friends. The day came. Lots of people arrived we hadn't ever met before; it was her landlady with numerous members of her family.

Abie Herman dropped in quite often till his untimely death. He would play the piano, share a meal, tell us about his properties and purchases and advise us on how to renovate our house. I keep in touch with two of his children, Marilyn, wherever she happens to be, and Geoffrey and his wife and baby in Jerusalem.

My part at the Primrose Club had ceased on the birth of our first baby in December 1951. The twins, Colin and Robert,

arrived two years later. When Bertha Fischer (now Betty Weiss) left on aliyah she passed on her treasured doll to Celia, our little girl, who cherished it throughout her childhood. We called the doll "Bertha". You can read the real Bertha's story as she told it to me in this issue.

Richard stayed involved and some years on became chair of the Primrose Club Management Committee. Their meetings were in our house. Then came a blow; the lease expired on the Belsize Park properties. The CBF said the Club would be closed. The CCC's function in rehabilitating your group was reaching an end, for most of you were nearing independence. Their funds, always tight, had to be focussed on their main functions. But Richard was adamant that the Club must stay open. It was The Boys' sole meeting place. There you provided each other with mutual support unavailable elsewhere. So he saw to it that the Club continued to function on a part-time basis at St. Peter's Hall till a new plan was made. Eventually the Finchley Road premises were taken on and the Club was again a flourishing concern. Local youngsters were keen to join. The new leaders were Sol and Thelma Marcus for, by then, Yogi Mayer had moved on to Brady Club. He knew you could now manage your own lives. With his great wisdom, sensitivity and understanding he had played a major part in your personal development.

A fresh chapter was written when, as adults by then, you founded the '45 Aid Society - with Ben at the helm as he has been ever since. What an achievement! You created a self-help group for mutual assistance among you, now young adults, struggling to maintain your independence, coping with numerous ups and downs at work, with difficult landladies, with personal relationships. Some would say this was a normal picture. The huge difference was you had no family to fall back on as had your British contemporaries. But you had - and continue to have - the '45 Aid Society as your family. Inevitably, as in every family, there have been, and still are, squabbles and disagreements and sibling rivalry. I do hope recent heated disagreements between old friends will simmer down. Such is life in the best of human society. And, after all, you are mere humans like the rest of us!

There came a time, after most of you were married, when you had stable jobs, businesses and careers and reached a more settled period. Your partners were then, and are now, a great strength, a marvellous support. Those who had had no wartime experience akin to yours quickly learned that any demands from The Boys took precedence even over theirs - that loyalty and solidarity among The Boys was paramount.

As you all matured so, too, did the '45 Aid Society. Suddenly (or so it seemed to me), a role reversal took place. You were contributing, and generously, to charities in Britain and in Israel - while always retaining responsibility and concern for each other. You are active on numerous relevant bodies. Ben and others have been in the forefront of negotiations for reparations and in numerous other educational and memorial activities. And Ben moved from being a recipient of the CBF, as you all were at first, to become its Treasurer. Special mention must be made of the garden dedicated to the Six Million in Hyde Park, your support for Beth Shalom, that very special memorial, and the development of the new Imperial War Museum exhibition.

The greatest pride of all, the true measure of your accomplishments, lies surely in the achievements of your children. It is overtly evident how you have led them to take full advantage of educational opportunities and career openings and provided every encouragement to do so - along avenues you were denied but dearly wished to enter. Their levels of success speak for you. And now you are enriching your lives through those of your grandchildren.

Professor Shamai Davidson of Shalvata Hospital in Israel was specially interested and deeply concerned in your welfare. Was it he who noticed how so many of your children, far more than in their peer group, are actively concerned with Human Rights issues? Your generation has entrusted them to keep alive knowledge of what the Nazi machine attempted to do, how far it went, the atrocities that were committed that took six draining years by the Allies to extinguish. It is a heavy commitment. The International Holocaust Survivors Gathering in July had as its sub-title:- Remembering for the Future, The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide. In one of the small discussion groups on that day it was one of The Boys who said it all: our duty is to fight for universal Human Rights.

I feel privileged to be a member of your Society and to have shared some of your joys and sorrows. Your strengths and achievements provide living evidence to the rest of us that good can triumph over evil.

REFLECTION AFTER THE HOLOCAUST - HEALING AND GROWING

Michael Novice
Majer Sosnowicz

The year is 2005. I am retired, living in San Jose, California, in a comfortable house. How did I get to there from an upstairs apartment in Zamenhof Street, Warsaw; Ostrowiec, Auschwitz, Buchenwald, and Theresienstadt?

The war years have been described elsewhere. While they brought me misery and suffering, they did, indirectly bring me to England and the USA.

After liberation from Theresienstadt I was not as completely in limbo as most people because I was so sick. Too sick to go out to celebrate, I spent the first few weeks in a Sick Bay in Theresienstadt, Czechoslovakia, nursed by Russian doctors and nurses. Fortunately I was able to rally sufficiently to join The Boys for the transport to England where, once again, I was too sick to be on my own. Thus, coping with what to do or how to manage on my own emotionally or financially was not the problem it could have been because shelter was provided and the presence of other Boys in a similar situation gave me emotional support.

Once I was partially cured the problem did arise as to what to do with myself and here a course of study was suggested by one of my counsellors that I pursue an academic career. Our wonderful British Central Fund (now World Jewish Relief) agreed to support my studies as long as I worked hard at it and passed the exams. This solved my financial problems and in a way the determination of where to live. While recuperating in Quare Mead I studied through a correspondence course. When that was not adequate I moved to Chelmsford Essex to attend a Technical College and lived with a family who were kind but not outstanding in their care for me. To keep emotionally sane I studied hard during the week and returned to Quare Mead for weekends where I received the emotional support from being with other Boys of our group.

At the time of liberation I had no idea whether any of my family had survived. Fortunately, within a few months I found that not only did my brother make it through the war in France, but my sister had survived the war and it was only a matter of how soon we could meet. I was no longer alone in the world. An enormous relief, a feeling of 'My Goodness, I have family' began to emerge, a feeling that became more marked when my siblings started having families of their own and I realised that there was a chance of a normal life for me too.

The years in Quare Mead gave me shelter and support but, like all good things, this came to an end. When Quare Mead closed down I found myself living in London where my girl friend, Ruth Minden, had her home. I met her in Quare Mead and we soon became friends. She was not the only reason I went to London. This great city offered a university where I could continue my studies. At first, the combination of living in Golders Green near Ruth, in a house with a landlady and some of our boys at the same residence, helped me to keep my psychological equilibrium. Eventually, I lived entirely independently in Belsize Park, visiting Ruth's family at weekends. Since I was still studying at the time, the British Central Fund was still partially supporting me, an income that was augmented by a scholarship from Middlesex County and by working various small jobs as the opportunity arose.

Living alone in Belsize Park posed a potential psychological problem of a feeling of great loneliness. I filled my time and mind with studying and many hours at the home of my girl friend. Soon I was one of the family, her parents becoming my second parents, her sisters becoming my sisters, so that stability, security and a feeling of belonging entered my life.

Receiving my Bachelors degree in June 1952, I soon landed a job in London, Mile End, working on Geiger counters. A friendship developed between me and a co-worker named Eric Shelton. Through him I was able to improve my professional life, even though it meant moving out of London to Chelmsford, Essex, to work at a company called English Electric Valve Company. Ruth and I married in September 1954 while I was working in Chelmsford, so our first home was in Essex. Being married was the final step in healing from the terrible feeling of loss. Nothing and no one can replace the lost, but I was able from now on, to lead a more or less normal life. We started a family, and built it around the principles with which we had both been raised. Decision making was now shared, and a chopped-down tree - my lost family - was able once more to sprout.

In 1964 we decided to move our little family, now counting five people, Judith, Miriam, and David, and the two of us, to the United States of America. Our first home there was in Elmira N.Y. Twelve years later we moved to San Jose, California, where we live today.

REFLECTIONS FROM RETIREMENT ON MY LIFE SINCE LIBERATION

My early years of this period were supported by living with and among my family of The Boys. This support was partly lost when I had to move from London to a part of the country where no other Boys were to be found. I felt a little less integrated into this family than I would have wished and this has been somewhat of a loss to me, although here, in San Jose I have found a similar group with whom I have great affinity. My periodic return to the annual re-union of the '45 Aid Society brings me back in every way, to my very special family of The Boys.

The past is the past; it cannot go away nor be forgotten. The memory of six years of unremitting hunger and misery just does not fly out of the window. In fact, it is our very affluence that reminds me of that period, when I see the abundance that is displayed for example, at *simches/celebrations*, and when I see much food thrown away. The cruelties I witnessed and experienced stay in my mind, but I do not let them get the better of me. It makes me understand so much more forcefully how superior is our faith, where such things can never be sanctioned from above, than whatever drove those who perpetrated them. This past has also given me a perspective on what is important and what is trivial, a perspective that has helped me cope with many a problem.

On the other hand, watching our children and grandchildren grow into fine Jewish men and women is not only of great satisfaction to Ruth and me, it is a pride and joy to know that they are walking in the way that their grandparents and great-grandparents would have wished.

The Almighty gave me health, strength, and ability, to make a comfortable living for myself and my family. We are comfortable in our retirement, spend time with our wonderful offspring and enjoy life the way it comes. It is we who have won in the long run. We have modelled our lives on the sayings in the *Pirkey Avoth* the Ethics of Our Fathers, where it is stated: (Ch.4 v.1)

Who is rich? He who is satisfied with his portion.

This axiom has stood me well during the travels of my life after Liberation.

A LETTER FROM SWITZERLAND

Jake Fersztand

(Reprinted from Journal No. 6, May 79, page 10)

While visiting England for the reunion, I was most warmly greeted by Ben at the end of the function. When Ben found out that Erica and I were planning to spend only a few more days in London, he insisted on having us over at his house before we left England.

Michael and Elaine, with whom we were staying in Watford and who spared no effort to make our visit very enjoyable, navigated Leon Freeman's car to Harrow where we all spent a very pleasant evening with Ben and his wife. In the course of the evening, the conversation turned to the fact that I was the only one of "the boys" to have settled in Switzerland and Ben asked me to write something about my experiences there.

Although I have by no means severed all my ties with the rest of the crowd, one could say that I am pretty well isolated from it. Apart from the occasional passerby from England in search of the sun, my contacts are limited to at most half a dozen of "the boys". Because the meetings are rather rare, the pleasure of seeing one another is all the greater and, on my part, they are a great source of ***strength***.

From the many aspects of living in a group or belonging to it I would like to say something about the strength and protection an individual can draw from the group and the feeling of security within it, as well as the fear of being exposed and misunderstood without.

The group was quite certainly a substitute for the family lost by most of us and it had a very strong influence on our development. The security we experienced through being protected by this group till we were able to stand on our own feet emotionally was invaluable and I don't think it's an exaggeration to say that within it one never really felt abandoned.

It is true that loneliness and a deep pain at the awareness of being the only one left (in many cases of quite sizeable families) prevailed in the hearts of most. I personally don't know what emotions were harboured by others after having found themselves uprooted from their families; one just didn't communicate feelings in those days. Yet, looking back, I would venture the guess that through our common past we found a higher level of understanding for one another in this group than is often possible among brothers and sisters in the normal family-cell.

After recent hi-jackings, it was recognised as advisable for the hi-jacked, when liberated, to be kept together for several days before letting them rejoin their families at home.

The "digestive process" of such an experience is faster and more complete when one can communicate with those who shared the same fate, for one is likely to feel better understood. Similarly, the coherence of our group helped to accelerate the integration process into "normal life" at a time when we hadn't digested any of our wartime experiences. It can doubtlessly be said that the group had a therapeutic as well as a protective value, and prevented over-exposure to a way of life which most of us envied, and few thought attainable.

People of all backgrounds, ages and interests look for some group, be it simply in the form of club membership where one pursues a hobby, in the form of professional affiliation, or because of deeper feelings of faith or "Weltanschauung". A group can radiate an enormous amount of strength and those who belong to it can just draw on it. It's as simple as that providing they are sensitive enough to feel it.

I know that some of us who stopped to reflect on the subject are aware of this but I would think that most drew strength from this group subconsciously, and perhaps became aware of the significance of the group ties through a special experience.

There are comparatively few people who, by fate, were drawn into a group like ours and who, judging by the number attending the last reunion, adhere to it with such intensity (although I was told that not as many attended this time as on previous occasions). The fact that many of "the boys" founded "Colonies" in the USA, Canada, Israel, etc., shows their will to keep the common experience alive and thereby ensure that the ***strength*** of the group is not lost. It is a strength that supplements that which most of us draw from our own families, but without which many of us would lack something.

As one who is at a geographical distance from it but in spirit has a strong sense of belonging to this group, I began asking myself how much strength actually emanates from it. Is it a measurable quantity? Of how much is one deprived by being away from it and not actively

participating in its activities? The fact that the need to meet and to have contact with one another does not diminish but, in fact, becomes greater, is shown by the formation of the new sections in the USA and Canada, that those in Israel instituted the Friday-night-parties, that sporadically someone shows up from as far afield as Australia or South America and looks for contact with some of us.

Is it possible that the one single component that makes happiness a single whole is missing from our family ties and other contacts we have, and that it can only be found in the group with whom we shared those early and unhappy experiences?

Or is our relationship to this group as individuals similar to that we would have had to our parents? Does it mean that we have to mature in order to become independent of it?

If one is fortunate one may become independent of one's parents but one never breaks with them. That's why I believe that there is no substitute for the ties that have grown through our common experience.

A friendly environment, an understanding family, success and satisfaction in our life can give us everything except that missing component which we can only draw from the group. That is why the reunion will not be obsolete as long as the last of us still has the ***strength*** to hold a leg of chicken in his hands. And even when some don't, it may be possible for them to regain some of their ***strength*** in the company of the remaining few who don't lack it.

DO YOU STILL LOOK AT LIFE?

Michael Etkind

Do you walk with a chip on your shoulder
Cursing life for not being too kind?
Do you blame cruel fate or your God
Or some scapegoat that's always around?

Are you slowly preparing for blows
As the clocks tick away with no pause?
Are you still as you were long ago
And ignore all your troubles and woes?

Do the Camps still lay claim on your time?
Do their ghosts still return in the night?
Do you manage to push them aside?
Do they flee when you put on the light?

Do you still look at life through your holocaust eyes
Seeing fear injustice and crime?
Do you stop at the sight try to help
Or walk by while diverting your gaze?

Have you really made peace with the world
As you near the end of the line?
Will you leave with a sigh or a smile?
Will you cling to the remnants of time?

Are you fearful of nearing the end
Though the ride was not cosy and soft?
Will you miss all the sights and the lights
Or the people who'll miss you the most?

Will you leave with resentment and fear
Knowing death's not the prettiest of sights?
Do you hope you will not disappear
And believe that there is after-life?

The questions come easily to mind
The answers are lagging behind.

WHY DID I BEGIN TO WRITE

Michael Etkind

For at least twenty years after the war, the Holocaust was hardly ever mentioned by me or by most of the other 'Boys'. My work in architecture brought me into contact with architects, engineers, quantity surveyors, and builders where the war was hardly a topic of conversation. Since 1946 I have been working in architects' offices and later I became engaged in property development. Even now in semi-retirement, I am still involved in the design of villas in Spain and Cyprus, and some buildings in this country.

Although many of my friends were the 'Boys', there was somehow a common understanding not to talk about our past and to converse only in English, even during the early stages of our arrival in this country, when our English was very poor.

Over thirty years ago Ben asked me to make a written contribution to the '45 Aid Society's Journal, which was already being published twice yearly. At first I declined, but, needless to say, Ben did not take 'no' for an answer, and eventually I agreed to write something, but I felt uneasy about doing it.

I began to think about my younger sister, Henka, who had died in the Lodz Ghetto in the summer of 1944, whilst I was, by then, in Buchenwald. That night my pillow was wet with tears. It was the first time I had really cried. I did not cry when my mother died in the ghetto, nor when my younger brother died of typhoid, nor when my father and older brother left for Warsaw, ending up in Kielce, and from there were probably taken to Treblinka or to Auschwitz. The following day I wrote a sort of letter to Henka in which one or two lines rhymed.

From that moment I found myself writing many short irregular verses, most of them related to the Holocaust. I could only express my feelings of the past in this way.

For some time the Holocaust deniers were getting publicity and that gave us the impetus to speak and write about our experiences. Rabbi Hugo Gryn told us that he felt forced to speak about Auschwitz because of the deniers, but recently German researchers have silenced those neo-Nazis.

When Sir Martin Gilbert first started to write about the Holocaust he was in many ways a trail-blazer, but nowadays many non-Jewish historians, including some Germans are following in his footsteps. After attending a lecture on the Holocaust I sent some of my poems to him, and to my surprise and delight he included one of them at the end of his first booklet for schools on the Holocaust. Some time later at another meeting, he read another poem of mine called 'A Dying Breed', and I was happy my words were being heard. I was, therefore, encouraged and continued to write in my spare time.

Rabbi Hugo Gryn and Rabbi Friedlander were both appreciative of my writing and thus encouraged me to continue, and Hugo read my work at the Holocaust Commemoration ceremonies in Hyde Park.

Felix Scharf, whose prose writings I much admire, once asked me, 'Where does it come from?' I am grateful to Ben for being the catalyst that made me write about our past. However important is our working and personal life, our contribution to the memory of the Holocaust is valuable. I am glad that I have written hundreds of pages about those times and will leave them for my descendants, Yad Vashem, and other organisations which might be interested.

Now in semi-retirement after a full and busy life in property development I still continue to write not only about the Holocaust but also on current events. The subject is inexhaustible and it is essential to educate the younger generations about those improbable and horrific events, relevant to what is still going on in the world. The Smith family in Beth Shalom are making a powerful contribution to commemorate the Holocaust and educate the young about genocide.

At one time or another most of us have thought about living in Israel, but whether we have done so or have remained outside, the situation there has always been very important to us. We all would like to see real peace, justice and security in the region. I wonder whether those of us who live outside could not do more to influence both sides by constructive criticism and advice. In the past our voices were silenced by those living there, but when two sides are entrenched in their opposing positions only an outside influence can break the stalemate. It is in the interest of the world that this problem should be peacefully solved.

Hitler, we are told, was in his youth an avid reader of anti-Semitic literature of Nietzche's philosophy, and the theories of racial selection which were popular at the beginning of the 20th century, and yet the Nazis later did not believe in words, only in brute force and threats. However, it was his words which eventually mobilised the Germans and led to the Second World War and Auschwitz.

Churchill's speeches were as

important as the actions of the British people in defeating Hitler. Perhaps the old proverb that, "The pen is mightier than the sword", might still be applicable.

It is the words of various radical and fanatical religious leaders that lead to suicide bombing and other acts of terrorism against innocent human beings. This does not preclude other factors such as extreme poverty and other injustices. If words can be so powerful as to lead men to such unnatural actions, then perhaps different words could restore them to their true nature and sensible human behaviour, such as self-preservation, as Jean-Jacque Rousseau states, "He, who pretends to look at death without fear, lies. All men are afraid of dying, this is the great law of sentient beings, without which the entire human species would soon be destroyed", or as Shakespeare states, "Thus conscience doth make cowards of us all".

The really brave man is not the one who has been brain-washed to believe that by killing innocent men, women and children, whilst blowing himself up he will end up in an imaginary paradise, but the one who values his own and other lives and is prepared to take calculated risks to defend himself, his country, and other human beings.

It is words that in the past fuelled, and are still fuelling anti-Semitism and other forms of racism. It was words that began the Spanish Inquisition and other witch-hunts.

But, if it is true that words can cause so much evil, it must be true that words can also heal.

As survivors of an extreme genocide it has been our duty to pass our stories on to future generations.

REFLECTIONS

(Quoted from an article by Roman Halter "In Praise of our Boys in Israel" which appeared in our Journal 1st April 1976, page 6).

Jackson, with his penetrating intelligence, was sitting next to me and would have none of this. "You talk like Ben with your 'fantastic' and 'success story'. We 'Boys'", he went on, "and this goes for all of us, failed only when we thought of ourselves as failure. When an individual feels and thinks that he is finished then he is finished, and I am happy to say that there are very few amongst us who failed. As to success, by whose standard ought we to measure it? By the achievements of Einstein, Rockefeller, Baal Shem Tov, Rembrandt? It's ridiculous, we are neither failures, nor successes, we are individuals who went through much and thereby learned a little more than other people from life's experiences; we learned to fight for what we believe, to be compassionate to and help others; we learned to overcome some shortcomings and to make the most of our talents and qualities. We learned not to believe in false prognoses - there is no Messiah on the tail end of Marx - life is a process. We 'Boys' found from the past that we are Jews and when we came through hell we found life and grew to love it and to love one another" and so we all drank Le-haim.

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

Robert Sherman

Robert is the husband of Judith Sherman. They live in New Jersey, U.S.A.

As Jews, where now do we stand in the world? This 60th Anniversary of the liberation of the camps and the final end of World War II and the Nazi's "Final Solution" seems to demand the question. Jewish history is always a complex mixture of disasters and successes. Memory is so important in Jewish tradition, that we must examine where we come from as we commemorate Yom Hashoah once again.

In the beginning. The members of the Society were born into the light and bosom of their caring families. Most of the families were reasonably well established in their communities. With all its daily problems, life seemed good and one could follow the rhythms of Jewish and national life. One could look forward to a future. In spite of anti-Semitism, you could be a Jew and a citizen of your country. Jews contributed disproportionately to their numbers of achievements in all areas of life and culture.

Then came the darkness. First came the persecutions and humiliations and then death and murder. Few found avenues of escape. Few were wanted anywhere in the world. The members of the Society miraculously lived through and survived the hell. They emerged out of a twisted

underground torture chamber of horrors. Most found very few if any other survivors of family and friends. They emerged alone. Where to go? What to do? The light of liberation was powerful, but it illuminated more of the horror than of a present or future. Memories - triggers of pain - all kinds of questions - what of God? Of being a Jew? What kind of world do we inhabit?

Help and self-determination and self-reliance. Fortunately, individuals and organisations came forward and gave a hand. Help and a place to put one self emerged. It quickly became clear that survival still depended on luck, connecting with others, and seizing opportunities. You discovered again that whatever the role of God in human affairs and the helpfulness of others, you had to take responsibility for yourself; you had to act and create ***your*** world. And so you did. Starting with little or nothing, you reached out and became creators and contributors. You profoundly impacted on the larger world as you created your world. Each, after his or her own fashion, also maintained some kind of identity as a Jew in spite of the Holocaust. An expression of faith, hope, resolve, revenge?

What of Jews Today?

Anti-Semitism. Well, anti-Semitism is still alive and well, but seldom as an instrument of state policy, as so often in the past. The world is freer and more accessible for Jews. There is greater respect and more acceptance of Jews as part of the "mainstream" in most countries. The idea of differences and diversity is more prevalent today than in former times. Germany and other countries have enacted special laws against hate, largely to protect Jews.

Recognition. The contributions of Jews to all aspects of society is generally known. We are both praised and condemned for our success and contributions. The argument that Jews control the world remains ridiculous. Though there are many Jewish poor, and even illiterates, the percentage of Jews who are socio-economically successful is very high compared with other groups. There are far more Jewish Nobel Prize winners than members of any other group. Jews stand out in business, entertainment, the arts, and scholarship. Jews are less reluctant to let others know that they are in some way "Jewish". Many Yiddish words and phrases are incorporated into English and from thence into many other languages. Kletzmer music is all the rage among non-Jews, even in Poland and Germany. Celebrities want to become Jewish, learn Kaballah, or claim some partial Jewish ancestry. Many Jewish customs and traditions are inculcated into world culture either in their own right or under the guise of other religions or philosophies. Much of the world worships the One God.

Apologia and remembrance. Several countries such as Germany, Poland, and Austria, and the Catholic Church have issued apologies for their parts in the Holocaust. Holocaust memorials and centres spring up like mushrooms everywhere. Yom Hashoah is widely commemorated. Holocaust education programmes are required parts of the curricula in many countries, as people recognise the power and consequences of hate and the failure to respond to it in civic and social affairs. Yet genocides continue with vicious and tragic results. The United Nations recognised the State of Israel. Partly out of guilt?

Israel. With all its problems and life under constant threat, Israel is a strong, vibrant country with considerable influence in world affairs through it creativity, productivity, exports, foreign aid, intellect, and strategic geographic position at the nexus of continents. Its powerful army able to defend the country gives the appearance to some that it is an aggressor precisely because of its strength. Jews are accused of being oppressors rather than victims because the world script says Jews are supposed to be the victims. Now Jews, too, need to think about the ethical uses of power vs. powerlessness.

Being Jewish. In the "days of darkness" to be Jewish was a death sentence. Today in much of the world it affords mainly opportunities. The prospects are so wide that Jews can afford to choose what it means to be a Jew and to publicly quarrel among themselves about the meanings of Jewishness. We have always quarrelled, but with care not to do so publicly. This creates a vibrant atmosphere for the expressions of a Jewish life. We can look forward to a future and debate what it should look like.

The "'45 Aid Society" The Society has been and is a potent force in supporting its members through the times of finding their way, making their way, and helping others to do the same. Its members helped to forge the present position of Jews in the world. The Society is a strong supporter of Israel, and, in its diversity, the Jewish heritage and way of life. Aren't you proud?

Of course you know all of the above, but it is good to stop, remember, reflect, and appreciate.

REFLECTIONS

Moniek (Joseph) Goldberg

As I consider the upcoming 60th anniversary of our liberation I am reminded of a Yiddish song *Dos Pintele Yid* ("We suffered often for being a Jew, we bent to the slightest breeze, yet the strongest storm cannot uproot this little yiddishe *pintele*"). I reflect on how we were battered by a terrible storm, we were lucky and, miraculously, we survived. We were lucky that in Theresienstadt there was Dr. Willie Groak who organised "a kinderheim" and got us out from that terrible place, the "Hamburger Kazerme". Good fortune provided for our departure from the horrible continent of Europe in August, 1945 - not on the wings of eagles as we read in the Torah (Exodus 19-4) but on the wings of Lancaster bombers courtesy of the British government. We were taken to Windermere, one of the nicest places in England, the Lake District. The people who looked after us were very nice. Mostly, they were people that had come to England from Germany just before the war so we were able to communicate as none of us spoke English. Looking back, I'm overwhelmed by their dedication and the efforts they made to help us adjust to living in a civilised society.

The gave us English lessons. In our block we had three people in charge. Ruth and Franz, who were from Germany, and Beirish who was Polish. Ruth came with us when we went to Loughton. There were others, too. Rabbi Weiss and Mr Levy, who was in charge of the kitchen. In the hospital there was a lady doctor whose name I do not remember. There was Sister Maria and Nurse Trudy: what wonderful human beings!!! There were many others. Even the local people were nice. There was this gentleman who taught us sports and there was this heavy lady who worked in the kitchen and taught us "hands, knees and boompsy daisy", and, of course, there was Mr Friedman.

I have, on other occasions, expressed my feelings about Mr Friedman. I can only repeat that I always admired him and I found that I could always talk to him and he was always very helpful. I am aware that there were others in the C.C.C. who were very much interested in our welfare but, personally, I only interacted with Mr Friedman.

We were in Windermere for a short while and then we were sent to various hostels. Thirty of us went to Loughton. Talk about lucky; the house, the gardens, and, above all, the people that looked after us. They tried, as much as possible, to make Loughton a home for us. Our first Matron was Sonia. She and Heini Goldberg, who was also in Windermere, were very involved in the Zionist movement and they encouraged young people from Habonim to come to visit our hostel for Onegim.

Some of those who came invited us to their homes. Josie, Bella Gottlieb, and Celia Einhorn, always received us warmly and showed us a good time. For me, this was a wonderful time. It was at Loughton that I met Fay and we have now been married for 56 years. Loughton was an open house, it was not unusual for us to have 20 - 30 visitors for high tea on a week-end and all were made very welcome.

We had lessons. We had discussions. We had prominent visitors, namely, Moshe Shertock and Berle Locker of the Zionist movement. A local clergyman attended our 3rd Seder and it was very successful, thanks to Batya who helped us organise it. Reverend Einhorn from the West Ham Synagogue came and brought young people. There was Dr Cohen from Walthamstow, who came and gave us lectures, with not so subtle hints of how we should conduct ourselves for our own good. And, of course, Mr Little the conductor of the 38A bus who used to look up Manor Road and if he saw any of us coming he would always hold up the bus until we got there.

Some of the boys from Loughton went to school. When Mr Friedman asked why I did not want to go to school, I told him I would rather go to work. He asked if I would consider private English lessons since I was making such good progress. I agreed and he arranged for me to go to a gentleman by the name of Canneti who lived in South Kensington. Mr Canneti was an author and he helped me quite a lot. He would give me a reading list then ask for my comments about the selections. He instructed me to read the News Chronicle and had me write my thoughts on articles by a columnist named A J Cummings. The experience proved very valuable to me. We left Loughton and moved to Belsize Park. While in Belsize Park, I was already working, but Ben and I started going to Bar Kochba for gymnastics. The next step for the committee was to find families who would host us for room and board. Jan Goldberger and I moved to Willesden and later we moved to Parliament Hill.

The Primrose Club was then formed and I am proud to say that Fay and I were both members of the first "cabinet". The club, under the leadership of Yogi Meyer was very successful. We had lots of activities and a cafeteria where Ms Mahra, a wonderful lady and excellent cook, was in charge.

Fay and I became engaged in May 1948. I left for Canada at

the end of September 1948 and Fay came over in November of that year and we were married in March 1949. We moved to the United States in November 1950, settling in Detroit, Michigan.

To return to the theme of why I think we were so lucky; I only spent three years in England but I consider it three of the most important years of my life. I made friendships that have lasted almost 60 years. I take a collective pride in the fact that all of us have become useful and productive citizens of our respective countries, in spite of the traumas we experienced.

It is very prevalent today when people, especially young people, witness a disaster, as was the case with the Columbine High School and other places, they receive special counselling to help them get over their trauma. In most cases, these children had their parents waiting for them with open arms to embrace and comfort them. We did not have that luxury, but we did have each other. Starting with Dr Groak, then with the C.C.C., they created a situation that has helped us bond together and become a family. I remember in Belsize Park, when Ben was waiting for his sister Mala to arrive from Sweden, some of us were so excited as if our own sister was coming. We share in each others joy and we hurt in each others pain. I once heard Sir Martin Gilbert while being interviewed on American Radio, re the book "The Boys", explain that when you see these boys, when they meet, the way they touch, the way they look, the spontaneous joy of seeing each other, is remarkably unique and special.

What Fay and I missed most when we moved from Michigan to Florida was being so near to Toronto. While living in Detroit we used to visit Toronto very often. We attended the Boys simchas and they attended ours.

We used to look forward with great anticipation to the English boys and their spouses visiting us in Florida. Aron and Evelyn, Krulik and Gloria, Ben and Arza, Zwirek and the late Ida, and many others from Israel, the late Ben, and Sala. Sala, of course, now comes with Josef, and many others who have come over the years. I think that Fay put it rather well when we celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. She posed the question: How is it that she could marry me, a man with no family, and somehow end up with so many brothers-in-law?

In closing, let me say that although we are 3,000 miles away, we have tried over the years to come and visit and attend reunions as often as possible. Let me take this opportunity to thank, first of all Ben Helfgott, our Chairman, who, from the beginning of the Primrose Club in 1947, to this present day, has done his utmost to keep our group together. Of course, there are so many others and I thank all of you. As I said, Fay and I are 3,000 miles away but we feel so very lucky that you have kept us all together and we look forward, health permitting, to many, many, more visits with you.

REACHING IN - REACHING OUT

Robert Sherman

We each have created our own intimate worlds in which we stand at the centre of our own lives and families. Hopefully we follow Hillel's dictum of "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? If I am only for myself, who am I? If not now then when?" In the process we define who is to be included in "we" and who are to be described as "them".

As Jews, others defined us and dehumanised us as "others" deserving only of persecution, death and destruction. This lesson we know well. We naturally tend to look to the "we" for support and nurturance. But our long history as Jews has taught us another lesson. "We" are a small minority and we must have strong alliances with non-Jews based on higher mutual interests and principles. Most of those who choose to become our enemies and seek our harm tend to be greater in number and stronger in might than we. The implications are that we cannot seclude ourselves and try to hide or be unnoticed. We are always noticed.

The historical lesson is that we must reach out and seek strong alliances with other appropriate groups in the larger society and actively work together for "Tikum Olam" - creating a better world, standing up for that which is right and good, working against hate, and protecting the right of all. Fortunately, we live in a time when the underlying philosophies of Western societies embody such principles, at least in theory, and we can build on that. On this 60th Anniversary of the liberation of the Camps, we know for a certainty that silence doesn't work. We must make our voices heard.

But this is not just a defensive manoeuvre. It cuts to the heart of the Jewish system of values to help improve the world and the human condition. It is our obligation as Jews to reach out to all to accomplish these goals. When a natural disaster occurs anywhere, Israel immediately sends aid regardless of the political complexion of the victims. This is our tradition.

Differences are the inevitable consequence of individual

and group uniqueness. We have different needs, goals, resources, and values. For example, there may be overlapping values and interests among all the major religions of the world, but there are also important distinguishing differences among them. There are important differences within the Jewish world as well. The challenge always is how to seek alliances and co-operation and some measure of unity when there are important differences that separate people from one another and one group from others. We recognise that differences need to be appreciated and respected as the cutting edge of growth. We can all learn from and enhance each other.

There has to be a willingness to engage with the other in spite of differences. Alliances are made based on common interests, and differences become subject to negotiation and synthesis or mutual tolerance.

As Jews we have to energetically reach out to other groups and engage them in dialogue and mutual activities in line with common interests. And we have to remain engaged when differences come to the fore. We do not have the luxury of going it alone. We also have a great deal to offer to others from our traditions and history and creativity.

We require the co-operation and support of non-Jewish groups in the larger society to put forward our agenda. This includes other faiths, political parties, civic organisations, government entities, and the world of information and entertainment that help shape people's minds and government policies. This is what the slogan "never again" really means - Jewish activism in concert with others.

Fortunately, there are many Jewish organisations and individuals who take these historical lessons seriously and are actively engaged with groups in the larger society. The '45 Aid Society is one such organisation. Both the Society and individual members have exerted the weight of their personalities and skills to engage the larger society on Holocaust issues, Holocaust Education, help to the needy, outreach to government entities and other organisations. Ben Helfgott stands out as a beacon in his efforts as an activist working with others on behalf of the interests of the Society, Jews and all of mankind. He makes his voice heard, creates alliances, is respectful of differences, secures co-operation, and negotiates differences. And he stays the course. This is our model.

Individually, we can write of our concerns to newspapers and companies, become members of community human relations councils, engage members of other faiths and organisations, make presentations to organisations, speak to students in schools and universities, and join with others to oppose hate wherever it is manifested.

We now have the 60th Anniversary. There will be the 70th, the 100th, the 200th. We must do what we can to control what happens in the world between those benchmark anniversaries.

Most of us are of "retirement age". But we are still here. To whatever degree we can within our capabilities, we must raise our voices and seek out alliances and encourage our children and grandchildren to become activists. Passivity and silence we know have dire consequences. We have to continue to reach out. It is not yet time for a well-earned rest. Maybe when Mosheiach comes.

SIXTY YEARS ON

Solly Irving

Whoever would have imagined when we arrived in this country on 14th August 1945, that most of us would still be here and awaiting, with excitement, the reception on 27th January 2005, hosted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. This special event is to celebrate the 60th anniversary of our liberation from hell.

Ever since we arrived in England we have endeavoured to establish ourselves and to acquire some normality to the lives we lost as youngsters. Most of us have married and brought up a family of which we are all very proud. We have joined different communities and done our best to help others in various ways.

Our closeness to each other has been a positive example to many outside our circle and we are a very close knit group - when one hurts, we all feel it. Many of us have suffered further personal tragedies and have found many advantages by belonging to such a unique "family". We feel so much for one another that many "outsiders" are envious.

Since retirement some of us have given valuable time outside of the community, to schools and other groups, speaking about our experiences in the Holocaust. We have helped a great deal to ensure that the Holocaust shall never be forgotten. All the above is proof positive that Hitler could not achieve his ultimate goal - the destruction of the Jewish people.

VICTOR GREENBEG (KUSHY)

In 1948 we formed a successful Primrose Jewish Youth Club. Although sport played a very important part, the most important advantage was the social side, it was like our second home. Our friendship developed strongly, which has not diminished. Those of us who started working and learning trades, went through a difficult period to begin with. As time passed, most of us achieved success in different fields. Almost all settled down, married and raised lovely families to be proud of. This is our greatest achievement, considering that we revived new generations of our families.

On a personal note, my group landed in Northern Ireland in February '46. We spent the spring and summer on Millisle Farm. Supported by the C.B.F., our carers were also refugees who arrived before the war. Dr Friedman was our leader. We benefited considerably from the freedom, friendship, sports activities, which we badly needed. In autumn '46, we left Millisle. Most settled in hostels around London, mine was in Golders Green. My first job was in an engineering company in Dalston, some distance away, working 5½ days weekly for less than £1.00. It was difficult to become independent with such low income.

By the end of '47, something inspirational emerged. I was informed that the Jews in Palestine were preparing to establish a Jewish State and trying to build up their military forces to defend the nation. It was the greatest hope for our future. At last Jews could be in a position to plan their own destiny and live in freedom. Some of us (the boys) decided to make our way to the then Palestine to fulfil our task. At the beginning of '48, I trained in the south of France and sailed to Israel in May, just before the state was declared. Upon arrival at Haifa, I was immediately transferred to an army camp and ended up in an armoured unit. I am proud to say that I was in one of the leading armoured cars during the capture of the Galil.

When the cease-fire came, I returned to London in spring '49 with the intention of travelling the world and return to settle in Israel. Things don't always go according to plan. I settled into work, met my loving wife Tina. We brought up a loving family and we now have seven joyful grand-children and one on the way.

SPEAKING OUT FOR THE FUTURE

Alec Ward

Like so many other survivors, Alec refused to discuss the Shoah for many years. "At first I couldn't talk, it was just too painful". But as the Holocaust became more widely discussed, he felt it was time to tell his story. And to those who have heard his emotive words and refusal to hate, it is clear he has much to teach. Alec has spoken to many audiences. Of all the synagogues, schools and audiences he has addressed, without question, he says, a group of life inmates at Lincoln Prison were his most rewarding.

Organised by Ben Helfgott, chair of the '45 Air Society, (a UK-based survivors' fundraising and support group), Alec and Hettie travelled to the prison to tell his story. As Alec explained to his enraptured audience:

"I too was a prisoner - although my crime was to be born Jewish." A letter from one of the prisoners holds pride of place in Alec's album, next to pictures of his late son, married daughter and grandchildren. The inmate wrote: "I admire your sense of forgiveness towards your tormentors' descendants and how you have moved on from your terrible traumatic experiences."

For Alec, teaching about the Holocaust is not just about remembering, but learning: "Education is the key, young people should be taught not to hate," he says.

A SYNOPSIS OF MY REHABILITATION IN ENGLAND

Roman Halter

On the morning of 24th November 1944, a train made up of ten cattle wagons, carrying fifty Jewish slave labourers and two S.S. men in each wagon, arrived in Dresden. I was amongst the group of five hundred who were taken from Stutthof concentration camp for slave work in an ammunition factory in Dresden.

We had originally been metal-workers, starved and starved-looking, guarded, beaten and terrorised by the S.S. We all experienced a glimmer of hope that perhaps now we would manage to survive Hitler and the Nazis.

We were made to get off the train and the S.S. lined us up in formation with five abreast. They counted and re-counted us and then marched us to the factory on 68 Schandauer Strasse.

I was seventeen then and had never in my life seen a beautiful city. Chodecz, the little Polish town in which I grew up and lived till the age of thirteen, was like a typical large Polish village. Its houses were single-storey structures. Many of them were clustered together like fungi in the forest and the overcrowded, dilapidated area which made up the Lodz Ghetto was terribly ugly.

Now, as we were made to march through the streets of Dresden, I saw beautiful architecture; here was civic pride writ large. Starved and starved-looking as I was, my sensitivities were fired and delighted by these wonderful, clean and undamaged buildings. I looked to the left and to the right until an S.S. man poked me with the butt of his rifle and told me to look only ahead. It was then that I promised myself that when I survived, I would do my utmost to study to become an architect. And thus the seed was planted in my mind on that morning in Dresden on 24th November 1944.

We, the 'Boys', were brought to England in August 1945. All of us raw in learning and ignorant about very many things. We were also a bit wild and devoid of any idea of what the future had in store for us; we didn't know what we were capable of becoming.

Then, after one year and seven months in England, I managed to get myself apprenticed to a structural and mechanical development engineering firm in Slough called S.M.D.E. Slough. It was an off-shoot of an aircraft factory specialising in aluminium alloy structures which were held together by 'pop-rivets'.

The kind employee who showed me round the factory and offices explained that most people who worked in S.M.D.E. were newly demobbed from the air force, navy and army, and that I would be asked to sign a piece of paper saying that I undertook to remain with the firm for three years.

This kind employee smiled a lot and I felt instinctively that I could trust him. So when he took me through the contract, clause by clause, and asked me whether I agreed, my reply was invariably, "Yes, I agree," though I understood very little of it. He pointed out that my pay each week would be £4.15/- and this amount would be reviewed every six months and that I would need to work forty-five hours a week.

He advised me to look for digs in Windsor. "It's a pretty place to live," he added, "You should be able to find accommodation with breakfast and dinner for under £3 per week."

I found a place there for £2.15/- per week in a house by the river run by a Jewish East End lady, aged seventy-two, who was a great character and well known on the Windsor racecourse. Her name was Mrs Ray Feldman.

After nineteen months in the U.K., in the Spring of 1947, at the age of twenty years nine months, I began my three-year apprenticeship with S.M.D.E. Slough and tasted my first joys of full independence. After the loss of my family and friends, whom I still missed very much, and all the trauma and suffering of the Holocaust years, I suddenly found, both at work, in the house where I lived and the people I came across, a genuine and unsentimental kindness which I liked and which suited me.

I joined the local swimming club and studied English in the evenings in my tiny room, using books for little children. I went to the cinema once a week and felt contented with life; the everyday normality was wonderful. I bought a second-hand postman's bike and cycled to and from work.

One day at lunch when I went to the canteen to buy my pudding - I could not afford the main course on my pay - I heard an ex-squadron leader saying to his colleagues, "When I led my squadron on Dresden on 13th February 1945 ..." I stopped dead in my tracks with my rice pudding in hand and said to him without hesitation, "I too was in Dresden on Tuesday 13th February 1945."

"But you were too young to be in the R.A.F.!" he retorted.

"I was on the ground, at 68 Schandauer Strasse."

There was then a momentary silence and, looking at his colleagues and then at me, the ex-squadron leader said, "How the hell did I miss you?"

At the time, my English was not advanced enough to appreciate the joke. The others laughed. A few days later, when this ex-squadron leader found out that my schooling stopped when I was twelve years old, he co-opted some of his engineer colleagues who took it in turns

to stay with me for half-an-hour after work in order to teach me different subjects. The ex-squadron leader taught me English. He was a wonderful teacher and a great leg-puller. I once asked him whether he really meant me to summarise a whole page of a textbook into three lines, or was he simply pulling my uncle? He smiled and said, "You mean ankle?" and pointed to the lower part of his leg. "Remember, Roman, you pull a 'leg', not an 'ankle' and certainly not an 'uncle'.

In my spare time, especially over the weekends, I used to sketch and that Christmas I gave each of my teachers a sketch. The ex-squadron leader gave me a small Oxford Dictionary as a present and I gave him a drawing which I had done of Windsor Castle.

By this time, I had told my teachers at work that my ambition was eventually to study architecture. They thought at first that I was being over-ambitious and somewhat utopian in my desires, but they took it upon themselves to help me pass the qualifying exams to enable me to study architecture.

At that time I was eating adequately, but not too much. I enjoyed my work at S.M.D.E. Slough. I cycled a lot in the fresh air and each day at lunchtime, before my pudding, I would swim in the indoor pool close to the trading estate. I had energy for everything.

My landlady, Mrs Ray Feldman, (most people along the River Wey where she lived just called her Ray) knew her horses. She studied their form and placed her small bets on her favourites. One of her favourites was a horse called Raymondway and whenever she won on 'Raymondway,' I would have a special evening meal - halibut, potatoes and salad. Then one day she told me that in honour of the horse she would call me Raymond.

"Roman," she said, "is not an English name."

So to dear Mrs Ray I became Raymond.

In autumn 1948, after the London Olympic Games, Windsor Swimming Club planned to hold a river race, downstream, of course, from one lock to the next. I put my name down to take part. I was then the Slough & Bucks one hundred yards freestyle champion. Mrs Ray asked me whether I would win and I cautiously and half-modestly said, "Perhaps." That was enough for Mrs Ray to place her bet on me.

On the day of the race, I was swimming round the bend of the river when I saw Mrs Ray lying on the grass and I heard her shout, "Come on Raymond!" with such zest and enthusiasm, for I was in the lead, that her false teeth feel into the river! I won the race, and it was halibut for me the next night for dinner.

The committee which brought us "Boys' to the U.K. in 1945 arranged for me to spend weekends in London at their expense. I had a room above the Primrose Club in Belsize Place and at the Club I met my hostel friends, the Holocaust survivors.

On Sunday mornings, my friend Ben Helfgott and I would go to the running track at Parliament Hill Fields to throw the discus, put the shot, pole-vault; anything and everything that could be done, we attempted it.

In Spring 1950, I finished my apprenticeship. My workmates and teachers at S.M.D.E. Slough took me to a pub to celebrate and wish me well. I said goodbye to my kind and caring landlady, for whom I bought a nice present, and moved to live in London. By that time I had passed certain exams which qualified me to study architecture in the evenings at the Northern Polytechnic (now the University of North London).

I found myself a day job with a structural engineering firm and three times a week I attended courses in architecture from 7 p.m. to 9.30 p.m. at the Poly in North London.

My love of life, my optimism, my good health, my enjoyment of the work I did in the structural office in London and my architectural studies all made me feel that I was on top of the world.

In the autumn of 1950 I was chosen to represent Britain at swimming in the Maccabiah Games in Israel. Susie Nador who, in 1948, had represented Hungary at swimming in London, was also in the team. In the Maccabiah Games she won five gold medals. We became good friends and after the Games our courtship began.

A tutor of architectural history said to me/us in passing that "Anyone wishing to become an architect ought first to see the wonders of Italian buildings." That was good enough for me. In 1951 I spent three months walking from the north of Italy right down to Naples, visiting many wonderful cities on the way and all the time sketching their buildings.

Susie Nador flew out to spend a week with me on Capri. That was our pre-wedding honeymoon. Both of us were penniless but rich in love and joy.

We married in September 1951. A year and a half later, I won a scholarship to study architecture full-time at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London. In the evenings I also attended painting classes with David Bomberg at the Borough Polytechnic.

Susie and I brought up three lovely children - a girl, a boy and ten years later another girl.

I eventually qualified as an architect, then taught architecture, opened my own architectural practice, one office in London and another in Cambridge. I also painted in my spare time and was ready for the happy, peaceful 'littleness' of life in this lovely country of ours.

A CAREER IN CHEMICAL RESEARCH

Witold Gutt D.Sc., Ph.D., M.Sc.(Lond), C.Chem., FRSC, FCS

In 1954 HM The Queen opened the Owen Falls Dam in Uganda, which controls the outflow of the Nile from Lake Victoria and provides hydro-electricity in East Africa.

In connection with this I obtained a Research Fellowship at the Building Research Establishment (BRE) to elucidate the deleterious action of phosphate which was hindering the use of local limestone to make cement in Uganda.

I helped to invent a high-temperature microscope and X-ray camera and using them found where the phosphate was going and set tolerance limits.

I showed that adding calcium fluoride acted as a remedy for the phosphate and this was successfully used on a commercial scale, providing cement for Uganda.

Concurrently, in the evenings I carried out research at Birkbeck College and, in 1957 I obtained an M.Sc. In electrochemistry.

In 1958 I obtained a permanent Civil Service appointment and was posted to work at BRE. My work was then widened to include studies of industrial waste materials with the objective of using them as building materials. An important area was the chemistry of Blast Furnace Slag, which is a by-product of iron extraction. The use of wastes conserves natural materials and reduces land dereliction and water pollution

High-temperature studies of the compounds found in Blast Furnace Slag led to improved equations defining stability for air-cooled Blast Furnace Slag used in construction as road-stone or aggregate for concrete. British Standard 1047:1983 covering such uses was substantially based on my published work and I chaired the committee that prepared it. In 1969 I was promoted to Head of Materials Division (Senior Principal Scientific Officer) which employed 75 scientists covering research on most building materials with emphasis on their durability and safety and the conservation of natural resources. Special attention was given to phasing out asbestos products because of their adverse effects on health, and to the development of substitutes for them. Also we worked on remedies for 'concrete cancer'.

During this time, new criteria were introduced for selecting research objectives. These were based on the customer/contractor principle, devised by Lord Rothschild FRS, head of the Government 'Think Tank'. This meant identifying 'customers' in the Department of the Environment (DOE), establishing their research requirements related to various Government policies, and trying to fulfil these by appropriate research programmes.

Work as Technical Consultant to the World Bank assessed plans for a new cement industry in West Africa based on phosphatic limestone.

Surveys of the uses and potential of waste materials for use in building, both in the UK and 20 countries were published.

The Materials Division was an internationally recognised research centre and attracted attached workers and Research fellows from UK industry and from Government laboratories abroad, who came to learn techniques and 'state of the art'. These included scientists from India, China, Japan, Israel, Poland and Yugoslavia.

I acted as a technical advisor to the DOE in relation to selection of materials for many large construction projects and in particular beneficial utilisation of waste materials in such projects, including bridges, the Thames Barrier, nuclear power stations and hydro-electric schemes.

I was the DOE assessor on the CBI/TUC working party on the use of Man-Made Mineral Fibres, which in 1972 produced a guidance document on their use as loft insulation; a topic of wide interest to all householders.

In 1966 I obtained a London Ph.D., and in the same year was elected Fellow the Royal Society of Chemistry, and in 1978 I obtained a London University D.Sc. In Chemistry for some 50 published research papers.

Application of my work has increased the use of industrial by-products, such as blast furnace slag, in building and road construction materials and helped to establish British Standards (BS) for cements and industrial by-products which are used in concrete. From 1978 - 2002 I was Chairman of British Standards Institution (BSI) Technical Committee on Cement and Lime.

Notable landmarks in the work at BSI include the revision of the main British Standards for ordinary Portland cements, for pulverised fuel ash from power stations for use as a cementitious component in structural concrete, e.g., in the Thames barrier; and ground granulated blast-furnace slag for use with Portland cement. This provided an essential quality cover for a new and successful UK industry utilising this

material. Such slag has been used. For example, the Humber Bridge and the Queen Elizabeth II Bridge over the Thames at Dartford, opened by The Queen in 1991.

On my retirement from the BRE in 1988 I continued as Chairman at BSI for 15 years, preparing and revising British Standards and contributing to new European standards.

Twenty years work in Europe in CEN committee TC51 led to the completion of the first European standard for common cements, EN197-1 to which the UK delegation has contributed in a major way and whose adoption had UK support. BSEN197-1 (2000) covers 27 common cements, really all the main cements used in Europe and from 1st April 2001 it has been in use in the UK.

In 1993 I was selected by BSI for a distinguished service award for contributions to the development of British and International Standards.

My late father, Abraham Gutt, was an architect. When I was a child he often liked to take me to his building sites to see his designs in construction. I think that he would have been pleased that I spent my working life in Building Research.

As a consequence of my concentration camp experiences, and the death of my parents in the Holocaust, there have been difficulties at times when dealing with situations which reminded me of some war events. I did not visit laboratories in Germany or Poland, and have refused assignments that would have involved meetings there. When I was proposed by the UK as President of the European CEN Committee on aggregates for concrete, I decided not to accept this appointment as it would have involved many meetings in Germany.

DR PAUL OPPENHEIMER, MBE

A short resume of his personal history and career.

Paul Oppenheimer was born in Berlin in 1928 as the eldest of three children. With the advent of Hitler and the Nazis in 1933, the Oppenheimer family emigrated to Holland in 1936. When the Germans occupied Holland in 1940, the family faced persecution once again. The Jewish population was subjected to an escalating number of restrictions, culminating in the eventual deportation "for re-settlement in the East. In 1943, the Oppenheimers were taken to the Westerbork transit camp in Holland and, in 1944, they were deported to the notorious Bergen-Belsen concentration camp near Hanover in Germany. Conditions in Bergen-Belsen were horrific. Hunger, disease and exhaustion killed tens of thousands, among them their parents. Miraculously, though, the three children survived and they were liberated by the Russians and came to England in 1945.

Although Paul could speak three languages by the time he was 10 years old, he had a very interrupted education - and no education at all during his 2 years in the camps, when he was 14 - 16 years old. At the age of 17, and all alone, Paul started a new life in England, working during the day and studying at night. He arrived in Birmingham in 1947, looked after by Ruth Simmons, a wonderful lady from the Jewish Refugees Committee. He lived in a hostel in Handsworth, run by Mrs Muller, and later in Vernon Avenue, Edgbaston, with Mrs Bach. Despite Mrs Simmons' efforts, his visits to the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue in Sheepcote Street, and Rabbi Hooker, were rare. His contact with the local Jewish community was confined to football, tennis and table-tennis.

After seven years, he graduated from London University in 1954 with a First Class Honours Degree (B.Sc) in Mechanical Engineering. He subsequently obtained a Master's Degree in Thermodynamics from Birmingham University in 1955. Paul qualified as a Chartered Engineer and was elected as a Fellow of the Institute of Mechanical Engineers. After successfully completing a 5-year Engineering Apprenticeship at BSA Tools Limited (147-1952), Paul worked in other parts of the BSA Group of Companies. He joined Joseph Limited in 1958 and transferred to Lucas Girling Limited in 1962. In 1970, he was appointed Technical Regulations Manager and he eventually became acknowledged as the leading authority of national and international standards and regulations for the type-approval of braking systems of passenger cars and commercial vehicles. He became an influential member of various technical committees developing Pan-European directives and regulations for the European Economic Community (EEC) in Brussels and the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in Geneva. Many of his technical presentations have been published by the Institution of Mechanical

Engineers in the UK and by the Society of Automotive Engineers in the USA. He received several prestigious prizes, including the European Traffic Safety Award in 2001. He was recognised in the 1990 New Year's Honours List and appointed an MBE "For services to the UK Motor Industry".

During his working life, for more than 40 years, Paul never spoke of his earlier days in Europe. It was only after his retirement in 1990, that he began a new and totally different 'career'. He started talking about his wartime experiences as a child survivor of the Holocaust and he found a new mission in life: to present his personal eye-witness account as a warning to students and adults, that such events should never happen again. Because such events are still happening today and have been happening; in Cambodia, Rwanda, East Timor, Bosnia and Kosovo. People are being hunted down because they are different; a different tribe, a different race, a different religion, a different colour of the skin. And all the 'different' people are taken to nearby forests and killed. This should not be happening.

Prejudice, discrimination, racism and genocide should be recognised and eliminated. Everyone should be treated equally and no-one should be afraid. "He who does not learn from history is doomed to repeat it (according to the philosopher Georges Santanyama).

In 1994, at one of his lectures, he met Stephen Smith and 12 months later, he attended the opening of Beth Shalom, the Holocaust Centre near Nottingham, and he has maintained his friendly association as a regular speaker. Paul's autobiography "From Belsen to Buckingham Palace" has been published by Beth Shalom in 1995 and almost 10,000 copies have been sold.

Paul continues to visit schools in increasing numbers, as teachers and students appreciate the importance of his story and the effectiveness of his illustrated presentation, using a CD-ROM and laptop computer. Despite increasing travelling difficulties, the students' positive reaction makes it all worthwhile, and Paul has completed more than 600 presentations. "Holocaust Education" has become the focus of Paul's life.

In 2004, the University of Wolverhampton conferred an Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters on Paul Oppenheimer, in recognition of his contribution to 'Holocaust Education'.

In 2005, Paul was invited to address a thousand teachers at the NUT Conference in Gateshead.

Paul is married to Corinne, with three happily married children - Nick, Simon and Judith - and six wonderful grandchildren.

A JOURNEY: FROM PRESOV (SLOVAKIA) TO KINGSTON (CANADA)

Foreword

Dr Erwin Buncel

The full text of this article will be published in the next issue of our Journal.

A few months ago I received a letter from Ben Helfgott suggesting that I write something for the '45 Aid Society Journal (as I had done several years ago). As Ben and his associates are doing such a wonderful job keeping the Journal and our memories alive, I thought of how I could contribute without subjecting myself to fresh emotional trauma. Reminiscing about those years is something that I have tried to avoid, though sometimes in vain, when, for example, the newspapers or TV rudely bring these into my consciousness. Anything to do with the war is a taboo subject at home.

Then came the idea of sending Ben my letter to Sir Martin Gilbert of a few years ago which I wrote after reading his book, *"The Boys"*. As I was reading the heart-rending wartime experiences of "the boys", experiences that were captured so faithfully in Martin Gilbert's account, I could not help but be carried along in my own past.

Reading and reflecting on *"The Boys"* I found myself talking in my mind to Dr Gilbert: "Sir, you did not mention this or that segment of the wartime drama... I know something about that which would interest you." So, over several months of ruminating on this, I toyed with the idea of writing to Sir Gilbert. Like many ideas, however, this one just remained in my head.

It took a stay in hospital that the idea of a letter to Martin Gilbert re-surfaced. I started on

it and as my memories kept re-surfacing my emotions were overwhelming me. I spent my full time writing from morning to night (I was to pay for this later through a bout of depression). The letter became a short life history; from Presov my home town in Slovakia, to Nagyszolos in Hungary in 1942, then to concentration camp in 1944. I managed to hold back on my experiences in Az. and Mn. but resumed the story after liberation - the journey back on the Danube (by barge) to Bratislava, then to Presov. Along with other kids who had returned in a vain search for family, I gravitated to Hachshara in Miskolc, then Kosice and from there via Prague to London, where my new life began, to be followed by the U.S. and Canada.

I sent off my letter and to my pleasant surprise Dr Gilbert wrote back quickly and very kindly. Our correspondence has continued until this day. My letter to Prof. Gilbert (dated July 30th 1998) follows. It includes a Postscript written in March 2003 and a final one in January 2005.

* * *

Epilogue (still in hospital, between angiogram and angioplasty).

When I started on this account, now over 6 months ago, it was with the thought of filling a gap in Martin Gilbert's book, *"The Boys"*. After all, I ***am*** one of The Boys that he so eloquently chronicled. The fact that my name does not appear in the book is not due to an oversight of Dr Gilbert. It's simply that I never attended any of the Old Boys' Reunions, either before leaving England in 1957 or since then. I even chose not to go to the 50th Anniversary Reunion when my friend Sid Finkel from Chicago told me that he would be attending. I could have made myself free from my busy schedule if I had really wanted to. So, Benek Helfgott, the "convenor" lost track of me a long time ago.

Why did I not attend the reunions? I always wanted to strike out on my own, to break free from the past. I know now that one cannot ever dissociate oneself completely from one's past. Benek Helfgott's heartrending cry on the death of his mother is a cry that I share. The memories well up on most days, but we must have the inner strength to continue. We are needed.

So having written my story, I know now that it was not for Dr Martin Gilbert that I wrote this, but for myself, and even more so for my children, Irene and Jacquie, towards whom I have been silent these years. I beg their forgiveness and hope there is still time to make up.

In the process of writing this account, I have come to appreciate how many people have appeared, seemingly out of nowhere, during critical moments of my life, and through their intervention the course of my life became changed, or even saved. First, my friend Sanyi Lenz, during the last days of Auschwitz when life itself was in the balance, literally grabbed me out of the line-up ("appell") of those who were doomed and together we ran to another barrack and joined the line of those who were to be evacuated. Then, in Mauthausen, the non-Jewish Czech inmates removed us from the slave labour camp, to join the safety of the potato peelers. Back from the camps, at the youth hostel (hachsharah), there came Uncle Izidor to open up the opportunities that England offered. Then, with the dissolution of Montford Hall, the red-headed Dr Friedman just happened to be passing through and invited me to Bunce Court School, which gave me the first taste and excitement that education offered and that became my life vocation. After Bunce Court, the British education system took over and with its traditional fairness and Government support via scholarships, gave me more than one chance to make good. The Jewish Refugees Committee continued their support over long periods when their finances were critically short. Finally, came Penny and the children to give meaning to my life. Now, I can only hope that I have been able to return to others some of this goodness that has come my way.

Postscript

Almost 5 years have passed since this "letter to Dr Martin Gilbert" was written. In the meantime I have made recovery from angioplasty and post-operative anxiety. As Professor Emeritus at Queen's University, I have been given the opportunity to continue my research work with graduate students and collaborations with colleagues from other countries. Another 50 publications (300 in all) have been written and 2 more books. I was honoured again by the Canadian Society of Chemistry with the R.U. Lemieux Award in Organic Chemistry. I have been blessed in family life with a second grandchild and with continued support from my life partner, Penny. Gradually, I hope to return to embrace again the religion of my father...

EB. March 2003

LIFE HAS BEEN VERY GOOD TO ME

John Fox

John came to England with the Windermere Group in August 1945. He lived in Loughton and Belsize Park Hostels. He married his wife Betty in England and emigrated to the U.S.A. in 1956.

When one is enjoying life it slips by so quick. For me that is how the last 60 years have gone by, very quickly. I find it hard to believe that it has been so long since we all landed in England in 1945. Those were valuable and important times for us, but eventually, we went our separate ways. Some of us made London our new home and others emigrated to other countries. I chose to come to the United States.

Although I have never regretted this choice, there are times when I miss the close comradeship of "the boys". We all have a common bond, having lived through the same experiences. There is no need for written words to remind us of those times. Those memories will be with us forever.

Life in America has been very good to me. From my very humble beginnings, I worked my way up in the clothing industry to become a prominent union leader in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. This position enabled me to travel extensively and meet many people, in all walks of life.

I have met four Israel Premiers, have had a private dinner with Willi Brandt in Germany (he told me some great jokes), met with Itzak Rabin, Lech Walesa, and even talked with the actor Danny Kaye.

My efforts on behalf of the Jewish people began in my early years and ultimately led to my being made the President of the Jewish Labor Committee. I also campaigned strongly for Israel Bonds.

One thing that makes me particularly proud is the Raoul Wallenberg Award that I received because of my efforts on behalf of the Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, where there is a plaque in my honor. I have always made it a priority in my life to help the less fortunate.

Although I can never replace the family that I lost, I now have a family of which I can proudly say, I am the patriarch. I would like to think that my parents would have been proud of their grandchildren and their great-grandchildren.

We must continue to do everything possible to ensure that Israel remains a free and democratic country. Future generations of Jews must have a "safety net" and a refuge so that they will never have to fear that they will be persecuted as we were.

After all that I have been through, I must say that LIFE IS GOOD!

REFLECTIONS ON A MIRACLE

Yisroel Rudzinski

It doesn't matter how many times I speak in public or private, I always repeat that whoever survived the war it was only due to Siyate Dishmaye - Divine Providence. G-d wanted us to live.

I come from Piotrkow. We were nine children at home of which only two of us survived. My oldest sister, who lives in Israel, and myself.

During the war I was sent to work in the Hortensia glass factory, which was lucky for me as otherwise I would have been sent to the gas chambers together with the rest of my family. From there I was sent to the Death Camp Skarzisko Kammiena where I was ready to be shot twice and was saved at the last moment. The details are too long to tell here. I was then sent to Buchenwald and from there to Schlieben Ammunition factory. My last stop was at Theresienstadt, where I was liberated.

In 1945 we were supposed to go to Israel but the plans were changed and we came to Windermere, England. We were three hundred youngsters and were divided up and sent to different hostels all over the country. Twenty-five of us went to Gateshead where we received a good Jewish upbringing. In 1948 I moved to London and learned a trade. In 1950 I married a Kindertransport survivor from Vienna. We have three children, two sons and a daughter who are all B"H married and frum. We have a bunch of grandchildren and an even bigger bunch of great-grandchildren, all of whom are B"H following our way of life. Some of them live in Israel and the rest in England. They are all wonderful and bring us much Nachas and joy. Whenever we meet they are always very interested to hear about the Holocaust and my experiences during the war and about my life back home.

For me personally it is very important that we friends meet together whenever possible and help each other whether it is financially or morally and especially now that we are all getting older.

THE SECOND GENERATION

Ardyn Halter

(Reprinted from Journal No. 9, December 1981, page 19)

Ardyn is the son of Susie and Roman Halter.

After the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors here in Israel, I have two questions to put to you. The first I put to both generations: what is the value of the '45 Aid Society to us, the second generation? The second question I put to my generation: who are we? Let me talk about the second question first and then, by considering it, come to include the first question.

Who are we? First, we are Jews. We are the children of the members of the '45 Aid Society; we are the offspring of survivors of the Shoah. These are the easy answers and they explain why we read this magazine. As the "second generation" we will always be the offspring of the holocaust survivors, though not always the children: the "boys'" boys. But are these answers enough? Are they invested with real meaning? Are they the only serious answers that we will ever be able to return to the question "Who are you?" Are the answers always going to be passive? I am this and that because of my parents. At the time of the outbreak of the war they were much younger than most of us are now and they were orphaned, oppressed, starved by others. Are we to accept passively our roles as links in an ineluctable chain of causation? Others oppressed our parents and thus we are defined as the sons and daughters of those who were oppressed. This is passive, this is too resigned. This is the way to continue the past, not to learn and build from it. From the past we can learn what it really means to be a Jew in the eyes of the world. From the past we must learn to be vigilant. We must believe that every word that is spoken against the Jew is spoken in earnest. But what else can we glean from the past? I believe that from the bondage of the past we must learn to understand the freedom offered to us today.

I believe Spinoza was right when he saw that there are two freedoms, one lesser, the other complete. The lesser freedom is only ostensible freedom. It is the freedom to choose, it is the freedom of those who elect to keep their choices open. The greater freedom is the freedom of a committed man, the freedom of spirit of one who has chosen the path that he knows to be right. To be truly free is to control one's own destiny. As Jews our responsibility extends beyond our own immediate concerns and convenience. The lesser freedom is that of the Jew in the Galut, in the diaspora, longing for Ha Shana Habaa be Yerushalayim, but never taking himself sufficiently seriously to get up and go there and stay there. True freedom consists in doing what is right for us and for the Jewish people, the State of Israel, for only there will we find true freedom as Jews, as citizens of our own state.

What have we, the second generation, in common? Clearly we have our parents, and what they have, in common. Their past is part of them. I saw that during the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors. What we have in common is less clear. Psychiatrists and psychologists try to make out that we have complexes as a result of what happened to our parents, they interview, question and probe; they look for patterns and categories. They will have a tougher job when they look into the next generation: the grand-children. It will be harder to find coherent patterns there. And the generation following that? What will come of the '45 Aid Society then? I do not think that it will exist. I only wish that the reason it will not exist were ALIYA.

Hanukkah Party for our children.

SECOND GENERATION DAY

Steven J Faull MA (Cantab) ARICS

(Reprinted from Journal No. 9, December 1981, page 16)

The author is the son of Diane and Stanley Faull - formerly Salek Falinower, of the Windermere Group. Stanley now lives in Brighton (Ed.).

Wednesday June 17th 1981 was the day devoted entirely to the children and grandchildren of Holocaust survivors. So important was this group considered by the organisers that a whole day of speeches, discussion groups and workshops was allocated for their benefit, with Holocaust survivors specifically excluded from the Conference on that day. Anyone actually attending the Conference could not help being emotionally moved by the meetings, and because the impressions received will obviously differ from one person to the next, the opinions which I formulated at the time and express in this article are purely personal and hence necessarily subjective.

The first question that was put to us at the Conference was why were we there and what did we hope to derive from such a meeting. For me, the first part of the question was easier to answer than the second. Having completed my studies and obtained my professional qualification, I was, at the time of the Conference, living and working on a Kibbutz between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Having qualified as a Second Generation participant by virtue of my father's wartime experiences in the Warsaw Ghetto, Majdanek, Buchenwald and Theresienstadt, I felt interested in attending the Conference to attempt to discover the feelings and experiences of other offspring of Holocaust survivors. I wanted to know whether there exist common factors between all children of survivors and whether our generation does in fact have any special responsibilities towards perpetuating the memory of the Holocaust.

The day itself was organised into several distinct sections. First, there were introductory speeches at the Plenary Assembly, followed by Discussion Groups, Workshops (where participants chose between subject headings such as Psychosocial Issues, Political Issues, Teaching the Holocaust, Philosophical Implications of the Holocaust, or Oral History), and concluded with poems and songs, and later at the Knesset a commemoration service for more than one million children killed during the Holocaust.

For me personally the most moving and interesting part of the whole day, indeed the whole Conference, was the Discussion Group. This involved twenty to thirty people sitting in a circle and discussing firstly, their parents' experience during the war, how the Holocaust had affected their own lives, why they were attending the Conference, and, finally, how they believed its memory should be perpetuated, if at all.

My discussion group contained about thirty people, ranging in age between about 20 and 35, predominantly from the United States although Great Britain, France, Spain, Australia and Argentina were also represented, and I believe they were reasonably representative of the six hundred or so people who attended the Second Generation conference. I was continually looking for similarities between others and myself in an attempt to better understand their feelings and attitudes, and hopefully to add a further dimension to my own life.

The most immediately noticeable difference between me and the American participants was the degree to which the Holocaust had affected and even - at least in some cases - dominated their lives. This fact evidenced itself in two ways. Firstly, it was obvious that the Americans were used to discussing the Holocaust in relation to their everyday lives (which certainly wasn't true of the two British participants in my group), were very lucid in discussing their emotions, and, secondly, the professions that the Americans tended to choose were psychologically based; sociologists, psychiatrists, social workers, lecturers and students of psychosocial matters.

This continual consciousness of the Holocaust is certainly not evident in my everyday existence nor in my relationship with my father. I believe that this fundamental difference exists for two reasons. In the first instance, the Holocaust survivors that went to America tended to be older than those arriving in England. It is

possible that the Holocaust affected them more, having perhaps lost wives and children in addition to the parents, brothers and sisters that the British survivors lost or, at any event, spending their most vital formative teens and early adult life in Nazi death camps, while our parents were able to lead more normal lives during their formative years, namely after the war had ended. Secondly, the Americans tended to live in "survivor communities" being brought up and going to school with children of other survivors where the topic of the Holocaust was allowed to remain a recurring if not continual subject of interest. In my own case this was not so, partly because I was privately educated, which involved living away from home from the age of seven, and partly because, while my father has never been reticent about discussing his wartime experiences, he decided, quite rightly in my opinion, to wait until we asked questions (normally following television programmes) rather than continually reminiscing with friends in our presence of discussing or telling or even lecturing us about them. This, I feel, enabled me and my brothers to get the Holocaust into some sort of perspective and didn't allow it to dominate our lives, which I believe would be counterproductive and retrogressive and serve no useful purpose. That is not to say that we are desensitised to the horrors of the Holocaust and indeed because we are the sons of a survivor it has heightened our sensitivity and most importantly made us particularly aware that the lessons derived from it should never be forgotten and that such events should never be allowed to happen again.

The desire to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust and ensure that it is not repeated was probably the main theme of the day. However, the burdens that these twin goals impose bring with them their own pressures. Many participants, especially the large American contingent, felt these pressures keenly and were often neurotic and depressed, which is partly explainable by the continual surveys which they underwent and which often concluded that they had every right to have psychological problems. Indeed, a US journalist wrote that the day for the Second Generation at the Conference was intended for therapeutic reasons where a "whole load of 'sickos' could get together and cry on each other's shoulders". While this is really wide off the mark, it is true that we, the Second Generation, often do feel enormous pressure from our parents, either explicit or implicit, to achieve near perfection in our studies, professions and life in order to justify our very existence and commute our parents' guilt complexes that they were in fact the ones "chosen" to survive.

This pressure is sometimes given expression in rage and anger. Many children felt that their parents were over-protective towards them, didn't understand them (not having led a normal early adult life themselves), and some were even browbeaten with the constant references to the Holocaust. Thus an additional gap had to be bridged, that is, in addition to the normal generation gap between parents and children. Curiously though, this rage and anger was often not vented against their parents, whom the children wished to avoid hurting because of their wartime experiences, but in other spheres, especially at school. How the individual handled these additional problems and pressures obviously varied from case to case, but if academic and professional achievement can in any way be used as a yardstick then it would seem in most cases these pressures have been handled successfully.

In conclusion, I felt enormous pride and a sense of satisfaction at the achievements of all those attending the Conference, as a special kind of kinship sprang up between us. My one disappointment was the fact that only three children of British Holocaust survivors were present. I found the experience very therapeutic and worthwhile and would recommend it to all Second Generation people. Indeed, I would be delighted to hear, through the '45 Aid Society Journal, from any other member of the Second Generation who would be interested in having a similar discussion group in England. The organisers of the World Gathering of Holocaust Survivors are, I believe, attempting to form international organisations to keep in touch with and monitor the progress of other groups in other countries. I believe that this is a worthwhile cause, because if we, the children and grandchildren of survivors, don't care, then who else will?

ZACHOR

By David N Goldberg

David is the son of Moniek and Fay. He was born in the United States and now lives in Miami, Florida.

The memory of the righteous shall be for a blessing
Proverbs 10:7

My father remembers the righteous. In this respect he is truly an observant Jew. As Jews we are commanded, time and again, to remember. While he might not be so responsive to the Torah's call to remember all the Commandments, Shabbat, or God, he surely compensates with his memories of the righteous; his beloved parents, sisters, family, and fellow Jews who perished in the Shoah. He remembers the niggunim his father used on a Holiday. He remembers how his mother and aunt made certain to provide food for the needy. He remembers the pearls of wisdom his father shared with him about Jewish law. He remembers their suffering too. The blessing of remembrance is bittersweet. The memories sustain him and pain him.

Any number of his landsleit can surely attest to his amazing recall of details from days before the war when he was only 11 years old or younger. It's not as if he has special "gift" or photographic memory that has manifested itself in other areas. He does have sharp, clear recall about other aspects of his life but it seems to be most remarkable in matters relating to his childhood. The Yarhtzeit candle burns daily in his heart and mind.

My father is not reticent by nature, as any of you even loosely acquainted with him must know. He has always been a quick-witted speaker capable or orating extemporaneously and relishing a good debate or argument, as any of you even of you even loosely acquainted with him must know. Words come easy to him. In spite of his lack of formal education, he completes the crossword puzzles (in ink, no less, with a little bit of hubris) and embarked, in his late 40s, to add Spanish to the number of languages he speaks.

Over the years, however, he has been guarded and selective about sharing his memories. The process of turning these preserved memories of the righteous into words has been slow in coming. For so long he kept them to himself or shared them only with my mother, his Landsleit, or the Boys. It took years before he would talk to me, or my brothers and sister, about his life before or during the war. Those revelations, at best, were sporadic and piece-meal. We found it easier to ask my mother direct questions - not daring to approach him with such painful subjects.

In the early '80s my dentist told me that his wife belonged to a second generation group meeting at an area university. I attended a few meetings and learned that they were collecting oral histories and testimonies from survivors. I suggested to my father that he participate. He was aghast. "What? Are you crazy? Do you think I would ever talk to any 'outsider' about these matters?"

At the time, however, he was already committing his memories and thoughts in writing to be shared with "insiders" via the '45 Aid Society Journal. His writings for the Journal began in the late '70s. His early articles debunked the notion of "survivor's guilt" and addressed the wicked and apathetic as well as the righteous. Writing for the Journal served as a catharsis that prompted him to commit his thoughts and memories to writing.

By the mid-'80s, with his children grown and grandchildren in the making, he started the painstaking task of recording his biography on audiotape. By the time he was asked to participate in Martin Gilbert's book, THE BOYS, he was primed and ready to share. Since then he has also agreed to be videotaped for Steven Spielberg's project to collect survivors' testimonies. Moreover, he keeps faith with the righteous by volunteering to speak to area schoolchildren about the Shoah.

He remembers the righteous in many other ways. He sings with the Yiddish club at his condo, frequently chants the Haftorah, and serves as the stand-in for the Cantor at our Shul. He keeps faith with the

righteous during these services. While davening Shacharit during the Yom Tovim the blessing falls upon all who are in attendance. Many of our congregants have mentioned that the experience transports them to their childhood and evokes memories of their European parents. He and my mother remember the righteous with the Yiddishkeit they offer their grandchildren. He remembers the righteous with his fervent Zionism and love of Israel.

Like a fine diamond formed after a long period of time under tremendous pressure and heat, his memories have been excavated from their subterranean birthing grounds, polished and ready to share with others. They shed their brilliant light upon the righteous whom they memorialise.

The '45 Aid Society with its Journal, have been such an important catalyst in this process. The Journal itself has gone from being a "diamond in the rough" with its early pamphlet appearance, to become a rather professional publication with neatly key lined type, glossy photos, and full panoply of articles representing three generations. It surely serves as a blessing for all those who read or contribute to its pages.

HAVE YOU MET MY DAD?

Alan Greenberg

Alan Greenberg is the son of Victor and Tina Greenberg.

Nelson Mandela, have you met my Dad?
A fourteen-year-old lad
Warm, loving and cared for, squashed in a train
The world gone insane?
Alone, lost in a camp
No sense turning back

Winston Churchill, have you met my Dad?
From things very bad
Did you sense his might?
To fight for what's right
To rebuild a life
Of dignity and manhood

Frank Sinatra, have you met my Dad?
No need to be sad
Upstanding, hair curly
Hola to his girly
Carving jewels with kind hands
Fuel for wife and the nest

Maggie Thatcher, have you met my Dad?
I bet you are glad
When humanity is taught
And no compromise sought
Imparting strength, guidance and courage
What better example?

David Beckham, have you met my Dad?
You'd know if you had
Partner, fund and a friend
Unconditional love's not the end
There's more richness to come
Love life as you can

Your Majesty the Queen, have you met my Dad?

VISIT TO AUSCHWITZ

Charles, Rosalind, Julia & Paul Herman

(Reprinted from Journal No. 23, Autumn 1999, page 45)

Charles, Rosalind, Julia and Paul, are the children of David and Olive Herman. David was born in Munkac 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.

The Herman Family - their visit to Auschwitz 28th April 1999.

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 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 Oswieczim 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.

"MOJ SYN" - MY SON (AS MY FATHER INTRODUCED ME DURING OUR TRAVELS IN POLAND)

Maurice Helfgott

(Reprinted from Journal No. 22, Autumn 1998, page 84)

Maurice is the son of Ben and Arza Helfgott

I went to Poland with my parents in 1985 and, as my memory of the details of that trip have faded, my desire to return with my video camera has increased.

On 31st August, a memorial plaque was to be unveiled in the Rakow Forest outside Piotrkow. My father's mother and younger sister were among 560 Jews who were murdered there on 20th December 1942. When Dad told us he was going, my wife Danielle and I decided not to miss the opportunity.

This article is not going to try to describe what Poland is like today, nor to recount the stories we heard of the years before 1945. As readers of the '45 Aid Society Journal, this would be all too familiar ground. My purpose is to show how I felt about visiting my father's home town, what I got out of it, and why I would encourage other second and third generations to go.

Understanding the stories

I remember vividly, the first time I visited Piotrkow in 1985. As a child, I had put together a picture in my mind based on different things I had been told; Piotrkow was a small town; there were very few, if any, cars; my grandfather owned a flour mill with two partners; he was very friendly with the Poles through his business relationships. As a child, I had conjured up a vision of a tiny rural hamlet with a white stone windmill on a small hillock and my grandfather sitting on the front of a horse cart with a Polish driver and a dozen big sacks of flour on the back. Of course, nobody said to me, "Describe your visual impression of pre-war Piotrkow and your grandfather's businesses" and since I had an image in my mind, I never stopped to ask - "is this right?" When we entered the busy town (pre-war population 70,000) and arrived at the flour mill, I could not believe it; 100m long and 4 stories high, it was a substantial factory. The reality of it radically changed my inaccurate mental picture. Much of pre-war Eastern Europe remains little changed - hearing the stories in their geographic context gives form to one's understanding and a focus for one's remembrance.

Connecting to a family I never knew.

As a child, I never "missed" my grandparents. Although I realised that many of my friends enjoyed special relationships with their grandparents, I had a very happy and rich family life. I enjoyed a close relationship with my mother's mother, Rebecca - the only grandparent I ever knew, and since that's the way it always was, I never felt any gap.

As a parent, I feel differently. Every second my son Sam spends with his grandparents is a joy to him, to them, and to me. I want that special relationship to go on and on for ever. I want him to know them, to learn from them, to be shaped by them; and just to be spoilt by them. Why not? From the grandparents' point of view, I want them to be able to go on enjoying the "naches" for ever.

When we visited Piotrkow, we went into one of the apartments where Ben and Mala lived with their family before the war. Dad excitedly pointed to the windows and to the fireplace, and he told stories he remembered about his parents in that place. As he did so, I felt a connectivity, a longing, a yearning and a spiritual attachment. Of course, it's a figment of my imagination rather than a meeting with ghosts, but although it made me feel sad, it also made me feel more rooted, more complete, more understanding of my origins, and more loyal to their memory.

Geography acts as a framework from which to connect to the family I never knew, and to realise that it was also ***my*** family that I never knew.

Making a record.

I don't think I'm the only one who fancies himself as a Spielberg! Watching the video record of our trip and sharing it with close family and friends has been extremely rewarding, all the more so because I know that it will be just as vital in 2098, as it is now.

Funnily enough, the itinerary or geography of the trip also provides the framework for the film. One doesn't have to go to film school to ask questions on camera and record the answers

in the places that the events happened.

At home we never made the time to really establish and record the facts for ourselves - by visiting together, the time and effort was made naturally.

Sorting out my own attitude to the Poles and to New Generations.

This is probably the least clear-cut of my experiences and inevitably perhaps, not everyone will agree. Certainly, I can't help but be strongly influenced by my father's attitudes and by my own experiences.

On the streets of Lodz, football fans from rival teams use the Magen David and the word Jew, as a slanderous insult in their mutually hostile graffiti. On the railway station platform in Piotrkow, teenage kids mocked and giggled at the sight of a Chasid from Bnei Brak in traditional dress. Some of the Poles who offered to "help" us were obviously just trying to get money from foreign Jews. Sometimes Danielle and I didn't feel comfortable - we couldn't say why but we were a little on our guard.

On the other hand, we met genuine kindness and openness. In Lutotow, a poor old widow gathered friends and brought us into her humble home, made us tea and told us stories of Jews they had known and what had happened to them. Plaques commemorating the Jewish community in the Main Square in Piotrkow remained in pride of place - untouched by vandals. At the Rakow Forest Memorial, a big contingent of local Polish officials joined to pay their respects.

The bottom line is, of course, that anti-Semites and bigots remain, but they are not ascendant. Engage them, see for yourself, understand, you will be rewarded.

My attitude is this, it's not my place to forgive, but neither is it my place to stereotype and condemn new generations.

29 Sep. 98.

MY FIRST VISIT TO MY FATHER'S BOYHOOD TOWN

Angela Cohen

(Reprinted from Journal No. 22, page 86)

Angela is the daughter of Mosbe and Lottie Malenicki who came to England with the Windermere group. He was a very successful businessman and has donated generously to many causes, including our Society.

Growing up as the child of a survivor, my father's painful legacy was inescapable. I was made conscious almost from the cradle of a family of girls and boys *'just like me'* who had been taken away and gassed because *just like me*, they were Jews. More poignantly, however, these children would have been my aunts and uncles. Each had a name, a face, even an amusing personal nuance. The sense of grief for a family that I had not know, in a place that I could not imagine, was overwhelming and continues to plague me today. Hence, the prospect of visiting Poland, and re-opening that dreadful chapter in my family's history left me reeling, with a mixture of emotions. Poland had always conjured up terrifying images of families separated and subsequently murdered, of deeply entrenched anti-Semitism and of monstrous Nazis stalking the street. During my short stay, my trepidation and fear was replaced by a deep sense of history and pervading grief that aided me in my quest to understand my father, the story of the Shoah and subsequently, myself a little better.

Arriving in Warsaw with my two sons, I was immediately aware and anxious of remaining close to them. I was similarly aware of seeking out older Polish faces amongst the crowds in the airport and wondering *what they were doing during the war!* We were met by a rather austere looking character called Ivan who announced himself as our driver. My father greeted him and directed him in perfect Polish to one of the last active surviving remnants of a once thriving and bustling Jewish community, the Warsaw Kosher restaurant. Sitting in a Kosher restaurant in Warsaw is a very powerful experience (as anyone who has been will give testimony to). It is certainly not the culinary experience that is memorable but rather its place as a monument. Even after the total desecration of the synagogues and any semblance of Jewish life, I could sit as a Jew and eat a bowl of gefilte fish and

chicken soup - a stirring act of victory over the evil of the Third Reich.

The following morning having arrived in Piotrkow Trybunalski, my father's boyhood town, we walked to the synagogue to be met by a horde of Jews from all over the world, from America to Scandinavia, from second to third generation survivors, all here to share this emotional pilgrimage back to their home town, back to memories of murdered loved ones who had perished before their eyes. The synagogue, which now houses a public library, is only evident on the wall of one back room which is strewn with bullet holes. I could not help feeling a deep sense of anger that the only testimony to this building, once a site of worship, or barmitzvahs and simchas, is a rusting plaque with the words 'site of the great synagogue', no doubt ignored every day by those who use the now scholastic facilities.

From the synagogue we were taken to the forest where Jews, mostly women and children, had been marched and massacred. At the site of the massacre, local Polish dignitaries and Jews stood united as prayers were said at this mass grave. For many, this was the focal point of their journey to Poland. As we stood with the mutilated bodies of our Jewish brothers and sisters under our feet, one felt a collective sense of loss, the Jewish prayers that echoed out into the forest united every Jew on that forest road.

The procession then sombrely moved to the Jewish cemetery. A Jahrzeit light was lit over another stone in remembrance of the murdered. I watched as a man recited in beautiful poetic Yiddish verse, an ode to his fallen family. Although I do not speak Yiddish, there is something about it that resonates through the soul like a shofar blowing unifying the Jewish spirit which makes it comprehensible... where is my mother... *where are her hands?*.... he wailed... but there were no answers, just the tears of onlooking Jewish bystanders to a needless and truly iniquitous tragedy.

The afternoon was spent visiting the factories where those who were kept alive by the Nazis to perform back-breaking slave labour were housed. From glass factories to woodwork plant, these places of 'work', (still operating in some cases) were sustained using the blood of Jewish workers, yet there is not a single monument to their incarceration or existence; something which I later found was practised throughout the town... It was as if the Jews had never existed.

Breaking away from the organised tour, my father took me and my two sons to his childhood home. For me, this was the fundamental purpose of my trip. Walking through the dilapidated yet imposing archway into a similarly decrepit courtyard we were met with curious faces of locals wondering the purpose of our unannounced visit. Luckily, they were far from hostile and showed my father and I around his flat where he had grown up. Each place in the building had a story, each nook and cranny served as a reminder of a sister or parent. This decaying building, which had seemingly been locked in a time capsule for fifty years even had the same wallpaper hanging that my father had known. I touched the walls and looked intently at their discoloured patterns and experienced a whole myriad of emotions from anger to grief. As we were about to leave the building, I saw my father looking at a woman with great curiosity and saw her reciprocating. They walked towards each other, shook hands and embraced and spoke in loud and broken Polish. The woman had lived in this apartment for 57 years and was employed by my father's family as a 'shabbat goy'. The power of this scene is something that I will always remember.

WE, THE CHILDREN

Naomi Gryn - 2005

We, the children of those who returned from the Nazi inferno, have netted some special perspectives: life is a miracle, precious and sweet, and hope is rooted in tomorrow. We know what can happen when morality becomes clouded by man's greed and his need for supremacy; our mandate is to pursue peace, to replace intolerance with trust, so that we might hand on to our own children a world that is safe from injustice.

MY DAD

Geoff Burgerman

Geoff Burgerman is the son of Monty and the late Essy Burgerman.

No doubt about it, my dad's middle name should be "positive" - because ever since I've know him that's what he has been!

Don't just take my word for it. If you know him, you know it's true - and if you don't just ask someone who does. Everybody loves my dad.

Monty Burgerman is his name. Of course, I can hear you say - good old Monty.

Have you ever known such a generous, kind and fun-loving character? He is life's original teflon man. Whatever has been thrown at him in his seventy plus years, just bounces off, leaving Monty stronger than ever, ready to face the next challenge.

He still works. Many of you would have seen him sitting on a deck chair enjoying an ice-cream outside his small east London shop (not unlike Del Boy) where he has become something of a landmark. Local residents, local shopkeepers and even the local constabulary all take time out for a gossip. And at Christmas, guess who has got the biggest sack full of gifts?

In January during the Holocaust Commemorations my dad became a media celebrity. Did it go to his head. You bet! He loved every minute of it. He featured on ITV and Sky news, the Daily Mirror, the Independent and Jewish Chronicle, recalling the horrors of sixty years ago. But the underlying message he gave was that you cannot go forward in life if you are still carrying the baggage of your past.

Despite warnings from myself and brother to behave he still had to have the final word when he was introduced to Her Majesty. All was going to plan until he told her he had been up all night excited at the prospect of their meeting and would she care to see him again! Visions of Monty being frog-marched to the Tower were erased thankfully as the Queen saw the funny side of his request and simply replied how important it was to have a good night's sleep.

And she was right. During the memorial service later, my brother was constantly elbowing dad as he threatened to doze off!

That's Monty, our dad and grandpa extraordinary. He radiates happiness and brings smiles and inspiration to all he meets. The word positive was created just for him. Long may he continue.

A VERY SPECIAL MAN

By Lorraine Kingsley and Helen Gordon, daughters of Montague and Milly Graham.

The Holocaust is more than just another story of a man's personal trial to us and our family. As Second Generation, we have listened to our father's story of death, cruelty and starvation for as long as we can remember. It's a story we have never become bored of but, in fact, hung on every word. To think our grandparents, aunts and uncles, had suffered such human immorality is something you can really never come to terms with. Now, as the numbers of survivors dwindle and the stories are becoming biographical and statistical, it has become even more important to ensure every story is told.

Recently, it was a real shock, when to commemorate the 60th Anniversary at a Sixth Form College in Hertfordshire, Helen enquired how many students had heard of the Holocaust. Astonishingly, only six of the forty students were aware of it. Three of them had Jewish blood. Similarly, many of our anglicised Jewish friends had heard of the Holocaust, but knew very little of what it encompassed. This is a frightening reflection of our society and makes you very wary of the future. Now it's time to add our father's story, as it's more important than ever for the Second Generation to carry the torch of remembrance. It is our time to stand up and recount the experiences of our parents to inform the future of the past so that it will never happen again.

Our father, a quiet and gentle man, has never publicly spoken of his story. His immense strength to renew his belief in man to survive, and build his own life, has been an inspiration to both of us. He knew only too well what the Holocaust encompassed.

The eldest child of Kalman and Zlata Grzmot, he lived in Sosnowiec, Poland. In 1939, the week before his Barmitzvah, the Nazis stormed into Poland and then his Hell began. His passage from boy to man, instead of being joyous, was a tragic and horrific journey. His family was broken up like the tens of thousands of other families. In 1941 they were

taken from their home to the Ghetto. His mother and youngest brother Benek, age 6, were rounded-up to go to the gas chambers in Auschwitz. Our father recalls how he crept up to the fence where they were being held. Both him and his mother begged Benek to go through a small hole in the fence. Unsurprisingly, he was terrified and would not let go of their mother. There wasn't time to argue, so our father made a tearful and painful farewell, as they all knew they would never see each other again. Dad and his middle brother Zelek continued to live with their father Kalman in the Ghetto. They survived on Zelek's escapes to smuggle bread and food back, until two weeks later they came to take Dad and Zelek. But Zelek had escaped out of the Ghetto that day and our father always held onto the hope that he had survived. In 1979, our parents managed to contact an old Polish neighbour and found out he'd been shot climbing into the Ghetto with food. We remember the day that Dad found out that his one remaining hope to find another surviving family member was taken away. The memories were hard to relive and the tears flowed.

This was also the last he saw of his father, although two months later, he did receive a wonderful Pesach present - a letter from him. That was the last he heard of him. In Auschwitz he was put to work in the fields. He learnt French in order to take messages, whilst also lagging pipes. For three years he managed to avoid the gas chambers and extermination round-ups. He remembers one time when he was helping the camp dentist, who hid him in a cupboard until after the round-up was completed.

At the end of 1944, as the Germans were retreating, he, like thousands of others, was put on a Death March. He walked from Gross Rosen to Buchenwald and then finally to Theresienstadt. He watched person after person collapse or get shot where they had fallen. He concentrated on surviving and found an inner strength to walk through frostbitten toes and starvation, but finally succumbed to illness. When he arrived in May 1945 in Theresienstadt, he was put into a death cart heading for the mass grave. It was only when a Danish liberator checked the cart he heard Dad groan, and he was pulled out and put onto a cart bound for hospital. This is where he was told his hell had come to an end but was too sick to celebrate the liberation, or even notice.

He arrived in Lake Windermere, England, with 'The Boys' in 1945. He spent three years recuperating and moved around until he settled down and created a new family. We have often asked how did he have any faith left in G-d or man, or have the will to even continue after everything he had lived through. Dad's response was simple, "The help I received to build a career and life was immense. The kindness of the people in the sanatoriums in England, whilst I recovered, was even greater. But, ultimately, the determination to not let the Nazi's win. I didn't survive to let my family's memory die." Dad has always said that his family were special and it was not until we were old enough to understand what he meant. We feel very lucky and proud to be able to relate to you our father's experiences. As Second Generation children, we will never comprehend the atrocities which our families in Europe went through, so for the ordinary person it must be almost impossible. Therefore, it is our duty to ensure continual testimony and remembrance for future generations of students to try to understand the Holocaust.

As for our father, he has now enjoyed Barmitzvahs three times over: HIS TWO SONS Kelvin and David and his grandson Jonathan. As for his grandchildren: Jonathan, Naomi, James and Danielle, he says, "I get nothing but nachas and joy".

WHAT BEING THE DAUGHTER-IN-LAW OF A HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR MEANS TO ME

Suzanne Wilder

My name is Suzanne Wilder and I am one of the daughters-in-law of Gloria and Krulik Wilder. I am married to Paul, the eldest son.

Krulik recently asked me if I would like to write a small article for the '45 Aid Society Journal about life with a family where the father is a Holocaust survivor.

I always knew about the Holocaust but had never met a survivor so my immediate reaction on meeting Krulik was what a courageous person he must be to carry on a normal life when he had witnessed such horrendous atrocities.

I found Krulik to be a typical caring father. I think in a lot of ways he reminded me of my own father. In those days I did not think too much about Krulik's background because at the time we were all organising our wedding.

I think it hit me when we had our wedding and Krulik had no family there, just many of the

other survivors who were, in fact, closer than family to him. I thought at that time how wonderful it was that they all came together even as far away as Israel and the USA to support Krulik at his son's wedding.

Krulik rarely spoke about the Holocaust, but one night we were having dinner at their house when the film Shindler's List had just come out and one of the family asked Krulik if the film was similar to what actually happened. He started to tell us that the film was very realistic when he broke down. It was then I realised how different his teenage years were from my own and how much strength of character he must have to have come to a strange country, learn a new language and start a new life.

Paul has gone back to Poland with his dad to Krulik's home town of Piotrkow and was really glad to see where his father was born. Our daughter Melody has spent a week in Poland visiting many concentration camps and she really felt this was a worthwhile trip. I myself have visited Auschwitz .... A day I will never forget.

I have become very close to Gloria and Krulik over the past twenty years and I think Krulik is an inspiration to us all. He loves his family unconditionally, he is a larger than life character and loves life. He always sees the good in people. He does not get upset over silly things the way other people do. I think this is because after what he has been through he realises what is important and what is not.

When I go to '45 Aid Society gatherings and see all the survivors chattering away, I realise what brave and courageous characters they all are and no-one should forget what they have been through.

My daughter has grown up being the grand-daughter of a Holocaust survivor and she has gone to a Jewish school, so hopefully she will carry on telling her children and grand-children about her brave and wonderful grandpa Krulik and what an inspiration he is.

On reflection, being the daughter-in-law of a Holocaust survivor, I think I am lucky coming into the family as I would never have appreciated what Holocaust survivors really went through. I also feel that we all have a special family warmth because of this.

LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST

Mandy Wilder

I was fourteen when I met Martin Wilder and was introduced to the Wilder family. My memories are vague from that far back, especially my knowledge of the Holocaust. I do remember Martin telling me his father was a Holocaust survivor and this fascinated me. I would try and ask Martin lots of questions, most of which he was unable to answer. A few years and many questions later, it became clear to me that Martin and his father Krulik had hardly discussed this subject. Practically all of Martin's information had come from his mother Gloria.

It took me many years to understand that Krulik was simply unable to discuss his early life. I can now appreciate that for Krulik it would take almost two generations, and his grandchildren's inquisitiveness for him to be able to converse about his memories. I have very clear memories of us all sitting at Gloria and Krulik's table one Friday night, when Marc, our eldest son, who was ten at the time, started to ask Krulik some questions. Although I could see Krulik wanted very much to answer, he became very emotional and the subject was changed. It was shortly after this that Krulik told us he wanted very much for his grandchildren, Marc, Max and Melody to know exactly what happened to him, so, with Gloria's help, he was going to write about his experiences.

I can remember exactly where I was sitting when I first read Krulik's story. I was stunned. Krulik was standing in front of me, and I remember looking from the words to him. Finding it so hard to accept that this man had not just lived through these terrible experiences but amazingly had gone on to live a normal life, got married, had children and grandchildren. Krulik was living proof of a person's unbelievable capability to survive, in every sense of the word.

I understand and completely agree that the survivors find it so important to educate the younger generation, but I think they will find it difficult to get them to give it the attention it deserves. Our children are yet another generation removed and I wonder and worry how long it will be before it becomes just another story from the Jewish history books. Will the Holocaust mean any more to my grandchildren, as they will be directly descended from a survivor? Today we live in a world where news is brought to us instantly, only last week we were all glued to the news, shocked as the tragedy around the tsunami disaster unfolded. However, such horrors are instantly forgotten as the world returns to its everyday life.

What effect has having a father-in-law who is a survivor

had on me? Obviously, I have learnt more about the Holocaust than I would ever have known before, as not just my parents, but all four of my grandparents were born in England. There has also been an impact on my family life; I believe it to be like a ripple effect. Not having had a normal childhood of his own must have made it so difficult for Krulik to bring up his own children, as we all learn from experience. This in turn has had an effect on Martin and in their turn, on my own children. Like all ripple effects, each circle less powerful than the last.

What I think I have learnt most from knowing Krulik is his amazing ability to forgive, from the silly annoying things in life, to the worst evil committed by man. He has understood what so many never realise; that to live in peace, one has to be peaceful inside. Krulik although like us all, not without faults, has always tried to live his life in an honourable way. I overheard one of his grandchildren say recent, "We can never stop learning from Grandpa". I thought never were truer words spoken.

MARILYN'S TRIBUTE

Marilyn, a teacher, is the daughter of Mayer and Toby Cornell.

2005 is a milestone, it marks the end of one of the most evil regimes in modern history. Media interest in early January was high. We worked and listened to programmes documenting the events of the Holocaust. There were heart-breaking testimonies from ageing survivors, revisiting the places of their nightmares. Inches of column space were written in newspapers and throughout Europe memorial services held, none more poignant than that at Auschwitz itself; the place that to the world is synonymous with the Holocaust.

January 27th 2005 found me within the awe-inspiring walls of Westminster Hall, gathered together with survivors and their families in the presence of Her Majesty The Queen. This was England's memorial, a chance to reflect on the terrible events of 1939 - 1945 as well as to pay tribute to those who survived, my parents and their friends amongst them. It was an honour to be present, but painfully moving!

I have been aware for as long as I can remember, that my parents were 'survivors', long before I understood the meaning and nuance of the word. Since starting school it was obvious that my family was different from those of my friends. Where were my grandparents, my aunts, uncles and cousins? The word 'ghetto', 'holocaust' and 'camp' were always in the background of my consciousness. Indeed, it seemed odd that the understanding I had assimilated of 'camp' was in no way connected to the happy images conjured up by holidays and people enjoying themselves!

Despite this undercurrent and the shadow it must have cast, my sister and I had a happy and remarkably ordinary childhood. Our parents provided a warm loving environment for us to grow up in. It never occurred to me that there was anything out of the ordinary about my parents; they were just Mum and Dad!

Now, with the passage of time and the perspective of an adult, I see things rather differently! I realise that my parents are really very special. After all they experienced, that they were able to raise my sister and me in a normal loving home is nothing short of miraculous! My Mum and Dad, Toby and Mayer, are survivors, the remnant of thriving families, decimated by the Nazis.

Barely out of their childhood as vulnerable teenagers Mum and Dad were exposed to extremes of hardship and cruelty; banalities too horrific to describe. Yet, after it was all over and they regained their health and strength, they managed to start new lives, in a new country. They found each other, married and began a family, to which my sister, I and our husbands have added seven grandchildren; perhaps their greatest source of joy! Even more amazing is that they are not alone in this achievement, their survivor friends have done so too!

Despite the dehumanisation and degradation you were subjected to, your souls were not crushed. The true goodness and depth of human spirit prevailed and enabled you, Mum and Dad, to be the wonderfully normal human beings you were meant to be. Perhaps it is a testament to your own happy childhoods that you have been able to slot back into life so effortlessly and become inconspicuous despite your survivor heritage.

To all of you survivors, but especially to my Mum and Dad, I want you to know how moved am I by your stories, how humbled am I, and how very, very proud of you I really am! May you all be blessed with the strength to continue as you do in health and happiness to 120!

A TRIBUTE TO MY BELOVED FATHER

Colin Lester-Balsam

Colin is the son of Harry and Pauline Balsam.

In September of 2002 as I took to the stage at the Hilton Hotel, Park Lane, London, to accept the Peter Grant Award for outstanding achievements within the record industry, I was filled with pride and honour, but not for myself. As I was presented with the award in front of the UK music industry, there was one person in that vast room aside from my adoring wife Amanda who felt far more pride than I could ever have felt. As I glanced from the stage and saw the look on his face, I knew that irrespective of me achieving gold and platinum status records, the odd royalty or two or receiving industry awards, the one thing that really mattered to me was the 'nachos' that it gave my father. Through his years of heartache at the hands of the Nazis and his subsequent task post 1945 of rebuilding his life, this award was down to him. Following such a traumatic and painful childhood and an indignant start to his life, he had managed to create a wonderfully happy family, a successful business and taught me the important meanings of life. On this evening, having managed to make him so proud and given him such pleasure meant everything to me. Of course, over the years he had many moments of nachos and pride from his entire family, but for me this was special.

As I started my acceptance speech, I addressed the room. However, I looked at my father. "We work in an industry where we create heroes and superstars. However, my hero is sitting ten feet from this stage, it's my father, and dad I love you", I said. The comment received rapturous applause directed at my father. To those of you who knew my hero, you will know that he was a teetotaller. That night, however, he drank lots of champagne, fine wine and partied with the rest of us well into the early hours of the following morning....

By contrast, in March of this year I was invited by Her Majesty the Queen to attend a small private cocktail party at Buckingham Palace. It was, of course, a great honour to be presented to the Queen and to drink champagne in not only her presence but in the presence of Monets, Van Dykes and other such great works of art hanging on the walls in the private rooms of the palace. All of this, however, was insignificant as the one person who truly would have been filled with pride and joy by my presence there, is sadly no longer with us... my mentor, my hero, my father, Harry Balsam.

MY HERO

Liron Velleman (Age 9)

Liron Velleman is the grandson of Alec and Hetty Ward.

Last December my class at Wolfson Hillel Primary School did a Chanukah presentation about heroes. First we had our daily Hebrew lesson and our Hebrew teacher Mrs Rowe talked about what the Torah says being a hero is all about. Mrs Rowe asked us to write down our hero. Everyone chose pop stars or sports players but in Pirkei Avot it says that a hero is a person who is brave and has gone through something and overcome it.

Mrs Rowe then told us to choose a hero using the text from Pirkei Avot. A lot of people came up with the idea of Moshe Aveinu, Nelson Mandela and Anne Frank.

But I did not think about the real outside world, I thought about the inner world of my family. So I came up with the idea of my grandfather Alec Ward. Mrs Rowe asked us for homework to write a short speech for the Chanukah presentation about our chosen hero. This is what I wrote...

'Alec Ward is my grandfather. He is a Holocaust survivor. He survived two concentration camps, two ghettoes and three slave labour camps. He also made a promise to himself that he would never hate anyone whatever they did to him. Nowadays my grandfather talks to people and encourages them not to hate anyone.'

In the Presentation we had three rows of eight children, the back row introduced the hero, the middle row talked about the hero and the front row lit a candle for each of the heroes.

My grandpa wrote a letter to the class as he was not able to come and he gave information of his life to our teacher Mrs Foreman.

MY TRIP TO AUSCHWITZ BY ELLIOTT STERN

Elliott is the 16-year-old son of Lorraine and grandson of Jeanette and Zigy Shipper.

A few weeks ago it was the sixtieth anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi extermination camp Auschwitz. Many of the survivors of the camp were invited to go back there for the commemorations. My grandfather was a survivor of many camps, one of them being Auschwitz, so he was invited back to the camp. My grandfather was allowed to take one travelling companion and as my mother and my aunt had already done this life-changing trip, I was asked by my grandfather to accompany him. When I was told that I would be going on this trip, I was overwhelmed. It is one thing to go to a concentration camp, but to go to a concentration camp as a Jew with a survivor who is your grandfather is something completely different. I was very scared and anxious about going to the camp and seeing what many innocent people had gone through merely for being Jewish.

Once we had arrived in Poland, we went straight to our hotel and as we arrived we were bombarded by the news crews. This was because my grandpa was one of the three British survivors who went back to the camps. Other British survivors went to meet the Queen at St James' Palace. The whole of the first night we were being interviewed and spoken to by the news crews and the press. The next morning we were awoken at five o'clock to travel to Auschwitz-Birkenau. I was not expecting to see the camp so close to civilisation. I thought it would be in the middle of nowhere but there were people living close by. I saw the famous watch tower and it sent shivers through my whole body - I felt fear and trepidation. We got out of our cab and the cold weather hit me in the face, it was minus eighteen. We then walked to one of the barracks with the news crews. Once we were in the barracks I saw the beds that people slept on and it made me feel sick to see this cruelty. I just could not understand how one human being could do something like this to another human being. We were interviewed inside the barracks and when we came out the cold took hold of me. I had never experienced being so cold in my whole life. I felt that I was being selfish if I would have told my grandpa or any of his friends that I was cold, because they suffered like this for four years in just a pair of pyjamas, and I was dressed in a thick jacket, gloves and strong shoes. All the things that I take for granted today, like sleeping in a warm bed, using a toilet and having warm clothes make me think how lucky my generation really is. It was unreal to think that just sixty years ago people were forced to endure such hardship.

About two hours later, we left the camp and the whole journey back to our hotel all I could think about was what I had seen at the camp. I could not get it out of my head. That evening we had a special ceremony in a shul in Krakow. We arrived at the shul and the service did not start for about an hour. Whilst we were waiting for the service to start, all the survivors were talking to each other like they had known each other their whole lives. They were like one massive family. Everyone who survived the Holocaust spoke Yiddish and this was the language that they all communicated to each other in. It was amazing to see survivors from all over the world joined together in freedom. The service began and all the speakers were very good, but the last speaker was a woman who was a survivor of Auschwitz, and her words really touched me. She was speaking from her heart and telling us about the horrific times that she spent in the camps.

Later that night we arrived back at our hotel and some news crews were waiting for us. My grandpa started talking with one of the reporters. I have read my grandpa's story before, but he told this reporter every detail of his amazing life. It seems unbelievable that anyone could have survived the dreadful torture that they were made to go through.

The next morning we went to a theatre for another commemoration. Many important people were there but, to me personally, the survivors were much more important than any of the Presidents. The service began and most of the dignitaries spoke and their words were very moving. Eli Wiesel was one of the last speakers. I have just begun reading his book 'Night' because the words that he told us have stayed with me from the day that I heard them until now and I'm sure they will stay with me for the rest of my life. When he was speaking, I got very emotional because I could not get my head around the fact that six million Jews were slaughtered for being proud of their religion. I feel that it is my responsibility to make sure that people never forget what happened because my generation is proof that Hitler's Final Solution failed. Never to forget is the debt that we all owe to the six million who were murdered.

After the ceremony we left the theatre and our coach took us to Auschwitz for the main ceremony. On the coach, I met

a really remarkable lady named Paula. I was interested to hear her talk and we spoke for the whole coach journey. The things she told me are things that I will never forget for the rest of my life. I learnt a lot from her and I am in contact with her now. The most important thing that she told me was that you should always keep your family close to you because, we all don't know how lucky we are that we have loving families. I knew that my grandpa was a really special person but, after meeting people like Paula, I have realised that every single survivor is special in their own way; they are all amazing people. On the coach we were told that ten thousand people would be at the camp for the ceremony. I was pleased and proud that ten thousand people had got together to commemorate this event and thought about all the anti-Semitism that we unfortunately have in the world today.

The service was held outside the camp in sub-zero temperatures. On the railway tracks leading into the camp, candles were lit. On every slat and all along the tracks little lights shone It was a deeply moving and powerful sight.

Whilst the people were speaking, a lady grabbed the microphone and started screaming "They stole my life, my freedom, my name and my family, and all I was, was a number." These words sum up the Holocaust. The Nazis turned every Jew into a number and that's all they were.

Once we got back to our hotel, I was in our room and all I could think about was that amazing lady Paul who I had met and I just wanted to tell her how I felt about the things she had told me. If I did not, it would have been something that I would have regretted for the rest of my life. I wrote her a letter and slipped it under the door of her room and now we e-mail each other on a regular basis. This trip is something that has changed my life and I believe that every Jew should go to the camps and see where our nation was persecuted merely for being a particular religion and being proud of it.

Every day I think about this trip and I will never forget it. To stand with my Grandpa in a place from which he never thought he would leave alive, as a free man, was the most incredible part of the trip for me. I have made it my duty to make sure that this horrendous Holocaust will never be forgotten and make sure it will never ever happen again, because that is all the survivors want and we all owe it to the six million who were murdered.

Thank you grandpa Zigy for this mind-blowing trip, it is something that will stay with me for the rest of my life.

BUT LIFE WENT ON...

Michael Etkind

We should have said:
No thanks... that's not for us
We should have spent our time
In silent contemplation of the past
We should have stepped aside
To let the rat-race pass
Without us joining in

We who have seen man's face
Without the mask
And felt hate's unrelenting blows

But... life went on
And caught us in its flow

But life went on
And forced new shoots
To plant their roots
Upon the ashes of the past.

DEDICATION OF MAGEN DAVID AMBULANCE

In September 2002 our Society decided to donate a fully-equipped ambulance to Magen David Adom in Israel and appealed to our members to support us in achieving this goal. They responded magnificently . We can be justly proud of our members for their generosity. Once again, they have proved when the occasion arises, they invariably respond. This time they have responded to a need that is close to our heart. We share memories of a traumatised past and to see the innocent, mutilated and wounded bodies in the streets of Jerusalem, Tel-Aviv, Netanya and other places in Israel, affects us deeply. We have been brought up to believe in the sanctity of the human being and the idea of a suicide bomber is completely alien to us as, indeed, it is to all civilised people. Saving a life is to us a sacred duty and by donating an ambulance to Magen David Adom we have demonstrated this commitment.

FOREVER IN OUR THOUGHTS
SURVIVORS WHO HAVE PASSED AWAY SINCE 1945

Abish Henry
Adler Idel
Aron Ralph
Balsam Harry
Banach Jack
Baker Sid (Canada)
Bart Yankel
Belmont John
Besserman Moshe
Binki Sam
Brafman Harry
Broch Avraham
Brunstein Sztasiek
Bulka Jack
Burgerman Esther
Clara Miss (Madricha)
Condon Eva
Cooper Sam
Dendorowicz David
Dessau Kopel
Deutsch Ignatz
Deutsch Zolly
Diamond Moishe
Diamond Sam
Dreihorn Bernard
Ellen Henry (Ellenbaum)
Engel Hersh
Farkas Frank
Fein Jack (Australia)
Finkelstein Issy
Fisch Jurek
Flash Michael
Frankel Morris
Freikorn Menachem
Fridal Edzia nee (Warszawska)
Friedman Norman
Fruhman Mark
Frydman Edith
Fryenberger Leo
Galka
Geddy Leon
Geller Chaim
Gilbert Simon
Glickson Jack
Glazier Henry
Golan Chaim (Heini)
Golding M - Manchester
Goldman Freddy
Green Henry
Holt Freddy
Grossman Leon
Gryn Hugo Rabbi
Guterman Majer
Herman Abe
Hershelowich Moishe
Himmelfarb Willy - USA
Jakob I.
Jayson Ariata
Jonisz David
Kadasiewicz Alek
Kahan Jack
Kampel Fiszel
Katz Bernard
Kaufman Jadzia (Balzam)
Kaye Henry
Kirsberg Alf
Klappholtz Kurt
Kohn Chaim
Korman S.
Krowicky Jack
Kurtz Jaszek
Kuszer Benim
Kusmierski Moshe
Kutner Itzchak
Levenstein Mordechai (Israel)
Levine Guta nee Davidowicz
Lee Micheal
Lewkowwicz Betty
Lipman Jack
Lister Oscar
Mahrer Julie
Malenicki Moishe
Margulies Clara
Margulies Menek
Meier Bruno
Montarz Jack
Muench Danny
Newton Benny
Orenstein Salek
Pantoffelmacher Shloimo
Parker Jerry
Perl Alec
Platt Masza nee
Dobrowolska
Pollack Baruch
Pomeranc Yitzchak (Pom)
Posnanski Jerzyk
Putermilch Mietek
Radzinski Kopel
Rand M.
Rapp Robert
Robeson Leo
Roseblum Chaskel
Rosenblatt Selig (Jimmy)
Rosenblatt I.
Ross Mike (Moniek Rotenstajn)
Rubinstein Joe
Satz Yaakov
Schwartzberg Zenek
Seligfeld Moniek
Shapiro Moniek
Sheinberger Eliash
Shepson Yankel
Sindler
Singer Lothar
Slomovic Chaskiel
Sohob Moriz - USA
Sommer David
Spiegal G - USA
Spiegel Eurgene - USA
Stein Emil
Stein Icky
Stobiecki I.
Swimer Sam
Targo Lola nee Goldherst
Tenenbaum Sam
Tribich Maurice
Van der Velde Joe
Wald Nat
Wajchendler Harry
Walshaw Sam
Wegier Jerry
Gerry E.
Wheeler Alan
Wiernik Danny
Wurzel Carol
Zwirek Ida
Zylberger Julius

40th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising 1983 - visit to Auschwitz with Board of Deputies of British Jews

Meeting in Washington D.C. '83.

At the World gathering of Survivors in Israel June 1981

Reunion 1980

Some of our members from abroad at on of our reunions

"The Boys" in 1946 protesting against British Policy Restricting survivors in D.P Camps in Germany from emigrating to Palestine. The Banner reads:- "DEATH IS NO STRANGER TO US"

Some of our members at the opening of the Holocaust Museum at the I.W.M.