

Just Us



A publication from Supreme Court Civil Branch, First J.D.
New York County and New York County Clerk's Office

Remembrance Issue No. 2, May 2013

Forward by Hon. Martin Shulman

On Tuesday, April 9, 2013, the Jewish Lawyers Guild in cooperation with the Gender Fairness Committee of the Civil Branch of the Supreme Court, New York County and the New York County Clerk's Office sponsored the annual Holocaust Remembrance Program. This program serves as a remembrance of the Holocaust, honors the past, and mourns the world we lost. It also inspires us to create a more just society and a safer, fairer world of peace and tolerance. "Just Us," in publishing this second special edition newsletter, shares the stories of six courageous individuals who survived the Holocaust. These stories were read, powerfully and eloquently, by Administrative Judge Sherry Klein-Heitler that afternoon during the poignant candle lighting ceremony that is part of our Program each year. This special edition newsletter also reprints the remarks of our Keynote Speaker, Jack Ratz, a survivor of the Gottendorf Death Camp and the author of *Endless Miracles*, his personal story of survival.

On International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the German-born Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI, speaking from St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, warned that humanity must always be on guard against a repeat of murderous racism: "The memory of this immense tragedy, which above all struck so harshly the Jewish people, must represent for everyone a constant warning so that the horrors of the past are not repeated, so that every form of hatred and racism is overcome, and that respect for, and dignity of, every human person is encouraged."

Echoing the concluding words of Mr. Ratz, we hope this special edition newsletter inspires you and helps remind all of us of our responsibility to protect the civil and human rights of all people in our society and across the world.



Candle Lighters

Sala (Sheindel) Bierman Elbaum

Sala (Sheindel) Bierman Elbaum, of blessed memory, was born in 1926 in Olkusz, Poland, and lived with her parents, three brothers and one sister in a small apartment with one big kitchen and one bedroom. Her paternal grandparents lived downstairs in a separate, one room apartment.

The Nazis occupied Olkusz in September 1939. In 1940, they segregated the Jews into a ghetto and life was very hard with rationing and nightly curfews. They Jews were forced to wear Yellow Stars and to do slave labor.

In the winter of 1941, in the middle of the night, the Nazis deported Sala – then only 15 years old - and her sister, Chanka, -also of blessed memory - to a labor camp. Sala would never again see her grandparents, parents, two of her brothers as well as her aunts and uncles and many other family members. It is believed that they were all murdered at Auschwitz.

The Nazis transported the girls to Klettendorf, a work camp near Breslau, in 1942. There, they were forced to work sewing army uniforms. They were able to sew some clothing for themselves. Life and work at Klettendorf appeared to be better than what Sala and her sister had heard about other work camps - but that was about to change.

At the end of 1943, they were sent to Ludwigsdorf, a sub-camp of the Gross Rosen concentration camp complex in Germany. There, they were forced to work in an ammunition factory. Their hair, the whites of their eyes, and their nails all turned red, the color of the gunpowder they were handling. Sala and her sister were forced to sleep together on hard beds and without enough clothing to wear; they went around almost naked. The Nazis rationed minimal food to the forced laborers in Ludwigsdorf, allowing only watery soup and one piece of bread each day.

At Ludwigsdorf. Sala's sister met her future husband – Shmulek - who was at a neighboring camp. A resourceful man, he was able to arrange for extra food, However, getting the food, from a hidden location, was dangerous. If caught, one would be shot by the Nazis. Sala summoned great courage, strength and selflessness in routinely retrieving the food and sharing it with her sister and others.



Sala and Izak Elbaum

Sala and her sister were liberated on May 9, 1945 when she was barely 19 years old. From their family, only their brother Volve survived. What was once an immediate family of seven had now been depleted to three. After the war, Sala met and married Izak Elbaum, also a Shoah survivor and the brother of a woman, Sheva Elbaum, she had met at Ludwigsdorf.

In 1949, Sala and Izak and their son, Steven, who was born in a displaced persons camp in Schwandorf, Germany in December 1948, immigrated to the United States. Sala and Izak had two more children, Trudy and Danny. Their children produced seven grandchildren.

The lighter of this candle never got to meet his Nanny Sala, who passed away in 1978 before he was born. All of Sala's grandchildren attended Jewish Day Schools and are active in their respective Jewish communities and in various Holocaust remembrance initiatives.

Nanny Sala was much beloved by her friends and family in the United States and elsewhere. To this day, friends and family weep spontaneously at the mention of her name and recollection of her good nature, kindness, selflessness and Yiddishe heart.

Lawrence Elbaum will light the next candle in memory of Sala Bierman Elbaum.

Alex and Evelyn Friedman

Alex Friedman was born in 1930 and grew up in Kashau, Czechoslovakia in a middle class home, Hasidic in its traditions and modern in its intellectual horizons. His father worked as a controller at a large grain company and his mother was a home-maker. He was the middle child of 3 children and attended both the local Jewish public school and religious school.

In 1938, Kashau and its environs were annexed by Hungary. The 11,000 Jews of Kashau (about one third of its population) led a relatively normal life until the Germans began deporting Jews from Hungary in the spring of 1944. In April of that year Jews were herded into a Jewish-owned brick factory at the outskirts of the town which served as a ghetto. Eventually, three trains of cattle cars left the brick factory, each carrying over 3,000 Jews to Auschwitz. Alex and his family were on the last train. Upon arrival, in June, Alex's mother and younger sister (who was nine at the time) were sent to the gas chambers.

Although Alex was only 13, he was mature looking for his age enabling him to become a slave laborer in various labor camps. For the first six months, he, his father and older brother Avraham Yaakov were able to stay together in Auschwitz and in various work camps in Silesia.

In January of 1945, Alex and his brother were forced to march hundreds of miles in the freezing weather from Silesia, Poland to the Ebensee, a concentration camp in central Austria. Shortly after their arrival in early March, his brother died and Alex was left alone.



The Friedman Family

In the camp, Alex worked in miles-long tunnels which the German had the surviving slave laborers dig into the sides of mountains in an effort to build bomb-proof munitions factories. His job was to carry the drill bits for the jackhammers which frequently broke and needed to be replaced.

Ebensee was liberated by the American army on the last day of World War II. Alex recounts watching an American tank roll over the concentration camp gate and recalls vividly how an enormous African American soldier came out of the tank picked him up, put him on the side of the tank and gave him his first Hershey's chocolate bar.

After recuperating for several months, Alex made his way back to Kaschau in the hopes of finding his father, but learned that he had died in April, three days before the camp where he was held was liberated. Fearing the occupying Soviets restraints, he took one of the last flights of the departing British Royal Air Force to a place he had never heard of, Northern Ireland.

He spent six months in a refugee farm settlement in Ireland, before moving to London where he lived and worked until 1949, when he received his visa to immigrate to the United States. Here, Alex began working in the jewelry business on 47th Street in Manhattan where he still works. He married Evelyn in 1956 and they have been living in Forest Hills, Queens ever since.

Evelyn Friedman, née Goldenberg, was born in Antwerp, Belgium in the late 1930s. She and her older brother, who lives in Kiryas Joel, New York, are both survivors. Their parents were Hungarian-speaking immigrants who moved to Belgium in the 1920s. Her father had a small textile workshop and was active in the Zionist Revisionist movement. Germany occupied Belgium in 1940 and many restrictions were placed on Jews. Evelyn's father was arrested one night in the summer of 1941 for violating a curfew (he had been meeting with other Jews to plan how to deal with the restrictions) and was beaten to death by the German police during questioning. The police returned the body to the

family and stated that he died of a heart attack. Evelyn remembers her father's funeral when she was four years old.

In 1942, when the Germans began deporting Jews who were not Belgian citizens, Evelyn's mother (a Hungarian citizen) took the children into hiding. They moved to a non-Jewish section of Antwerp and adopted non-Jewish names and personas. Her mother pretended that she had a Flemish husband who was working in a factory in Germany.

Using false papers, the family lived that way for many months until Evelyn's mother, fearful of denunciations, placed Evelyn in a convent and her brother in a monastery. Every second Sunday, their mother would visit them, alternately. She lived in a convent for over a year and then with non-Jewish farmer in rural Belgium.

When the war ended, their mother returned to collect them. They lived in Antwerp for nine years, where Evelyn attended the Jewish Bais Yaakov school for girls and worked. The family finally immigrated to the United States in 1953 and moved to Brooklyn. Evelyn married Alex in 1956.

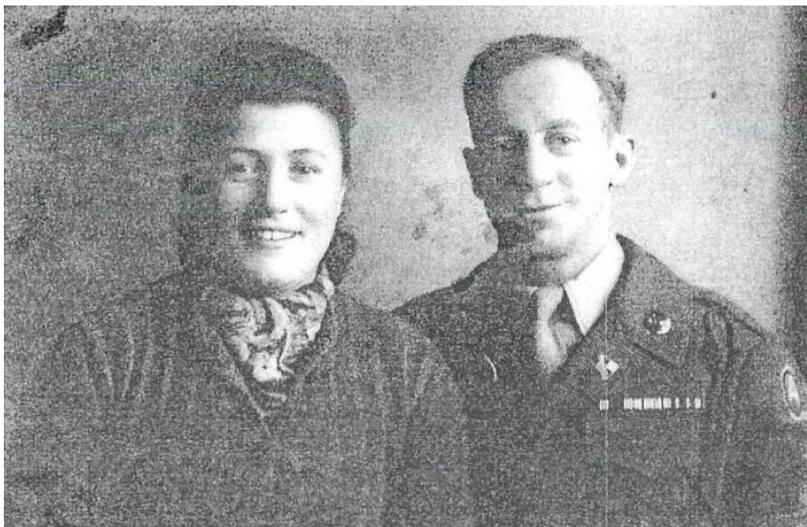
Alex and Evelyn have 4 children, 9 grandchildren and one great-grandchild of whom they are all proud. They have been active members of the New York Jewish community for many years. Among the groups in which Alex has been involved, is the successor to the Zionist Revisionist movement in which Evelyn's father was active in Antwerp. They are also proud that they were able to give all their children a broad religious and secular education that they themselves were not able to receive.

The next candle will be lit by Alex and Evelyn Friedman, accompanied by two of their four children, Aaron Friedman, a real estate attorney in Manhattan, and Naftali Friedman.

Lola Kaplan

I light a candle today to honor my mother, Lola Kaplan, a survivor of the Nazi labor and concentration camps. My mom was born in Zwolen, Poland in 1916. Her father was very orthodox, her mother not as much but she wore the traditional head-covering of a married woman. At four years of age mom and her family went to live with her maternal grandmother in Warsaw, Poland. It was not a happy time because my grandfather, her father, had difficulty supporting his family, and my great-grandmother was a mean woman; however, it was either live with her or become homeless. My mom was the youngest of five children and the only one of her siblings to attend public school because it was made compulsory during her childhood. The school she attended was segregated. Only Jewish students attended. She told me that every day, following dismissal, teachers would accompany the students several blocks to protect them from Polish kids who threw stones at Jewish school children and shouted anti-Semitic insults at them. At eighteen my mom joined a Zionist organization, where she felt at home; she had fun, made friends, and shared the dreams of her contemporaries of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, where they would live free of anti-Semitism.

When the War began my mom managed to obtain false papers which enabled her to travel to Zwolen by train to join her mother and sister. During the trip a small Polish boy on the same train who was traveling with his mother looked at my mother and uttered "Zhid." My mom thought: "This is the end of me." Luckily his mother didn't pay attention, and the boy forgot about my mother. She arrived safely in Zwolen. (My mom stayed in Warsaw after her mother and sister left in order to care for her father who eventually died of starvation.)



Lola and Sam Kaplan on their wedding day

In Zwolen my mother got work as a nurse's aide, which enabled her to earn money for food. Several months later she was selected for transport to a labor camp. She would never again see her own mother. My mother was sent to the Częstochowa labor camp, and from there to another, Skarżysko-Kamienna and then to Allach. In one of these camps she reunited with her sister, Helen, who helped my mom survive by working her own and my mother's machines when my mother was too sick to go to work. Had the Nazis discovered that my mother was sick, they would have shot her. My mother and her sister were then sent to concentration camps; their final camp was Bergen Belsen. While on a death march from that camp to Tyrol, Italy, they were liberated by American soldiers.

Following the war's end, my mother and aunt were sent to a displaced persons camp in Feldafing, Germany. There she met my father, an American soldier whose unit guarded the camp. She was very cautious about becoming acquainted with my dad, because he didn't look Jewish. My dad was blond with blue eyes, like Polish Christians. She slowly began trusting him, however, when he addressed her in fluent Yiddish. My parents married, December 1945.

Life in the U.S. was not easy. My mom missed the family she lost--her own mother, especially. Despite the emotional trauma she experienced my mother had a lot of grit. She attended night classes at Thomas Jefferson High School in Brooklyn to learn English. She loved learning, and instilled in her children, my sister and me, a love of learning. My mother was self-educated. She listened to political and medical programs on the radio. She read articles and books on nutrition, diabetes, cholesterol, etc. She was interested in psychology which began when she listened to Dr. Joyce Brothers on TV when I was a little girl. My mom was proud that she read a lot--not only English books, but also Polish and Yiddish so she wouldn't forget these languages. She was very proud that she knew how to read Hebrew when she went to synagogue to pray, which was rarely. When each of my two daughters stood on the Bima to recite a Torah portion for Bat Mitzvah their "nanny," Lola, quelled. Mom's grandchildren were her pride and joy. My mom and dad were so proud when my daughter Ingrid was born and my dad, Sam, would have been just as proud of my daughter Sabrina, named for him. For my parents my children were the continuation of their hopes and dreams. My mom knew she wouldn't live to see her grandchildren marry. She died in 2007 at age 91. A year before her death, she looked at my daughter

Ingrid and said in Yiddish “she looks like a “kallah maydl,” a bride. Mom said Sabrina would be “something special in life.” Her dream was for her grandchildren to have healthy, happy and prosperous lives, and to marry and have children of their own--and to always remember their roots. I know she and my dad are watching over them.

Henry and Helene Kasha

Henry Kasha came from a prosperous, mostly secular family who lived in Warsaw before the war. His parents owned a pharmacy and an ice-cream shop. Henry was 10 when Poland was invaded in 1939. He and his parents and one aunt survived in the Ghetto, where they were forced to work as slave laborers.

In 1943, shortly before the Jewish Ghetto Uprising, with the help of non-Jewish friends, and bribes, Henry and his family were able to escape. Along with other Jewish refugees, they were hidden



Helene and Henry Kasha

in a tiny, windowless room specially constructed behind the x-ray machine in the dental office of the non-Jewish common law wife of one of Henry's uncles. They remained hidden in that tiny room, uncomfortable, but alive.

In 1944, during the Warsaw Uprising by the Polish resistance, an artillery shell or rocket destroyed the building they were in, literally throwing the refugees into the street for the first time in a year. They scrambled for new shelter and spent the remainder of the war in the basement of a burned-out building, scrounging for food scraps at night. Eventually, after a massive Soviet artillery barrage and vengeful destruction by retreating Nazi forces, they were liberated, at least from the Nazis. Although the Soviet occupation that followed was repressive, it was the difference between life and death for many Jews. A tiny percentage of Warsaw's Jews survived the war. Henry is one of them.

Helene of blessed memory and her family had fled anti-Semitism in rural Eastern Europe, settling in Alsace, France, in the early 1930s. Helene was three years old when France was invaded.

Her family then fled to Lyon, which was supposedly in “Free” France, under the Vichy regime. Eventually, the Vichy regime itself was wiped away, and Lyon fell under direct Nazi control, headed by the notorious Nazi Klaus Barbie. Helene's family knew that they had to leave and through bribes snuck into Switzerland, with other families, hidden inside of a cement truck.

Switzerland did not grant entry to many refugees, but Jews who made it into Swiss territory were safe. Helene spent the war years living in a home in Basel, Switzerland, near the Alsacian border, just a few miles away from her original home.

Helene and Henry met in England in the 1950s and lived in Israel and France before settling in the United States in the 1960s.

Jeremy R. Kasha, the son of Helene and Henry, lights this candle. He is an Assistant Attorney General in the Antitrust Bureau of the Office of the New York Attorney General in New York City.

Julius Kirchheimer and Margot Strauss Kirchheimer

Julius Kirchheimer was born in Niederstetten, Germany in 1921. He was arrested on Kristallnacht on November 10, 1938 at the age of 16, and sent to Dachau. Because he had applied for visas for America and Palestine, Julius was released after seven weeks and came to New York on August 30, 1939. He immediately set about trying to get visas for his family. His parents, older sister, and younger brother went to Holland in 1941, and on August 17, 1942, they were deported to Westerbork. On November 2, 1942, they were sent to Auschwitz and killed on arrival.

In 1950, Julius met Margot Strauss on a blind date. They fell in love and married. Julius was proud of his wife and of the accomplishments of their two children. One of their sons became an Israeli citizen and served in the army, and his daughter, Janet, became a poet and teacher. Julius tended his vegetable garden each summer, and took care of the birds that came to the feeder each day. He died on July 16, 2011.

Margot Strauss Kirchheimer, was born in Fulda, Germany in 1929. In 1936, when she was six years old, she refused to say Heil Hitler at school and was stoned by other students. The principal told her parents it was no longer safe for her attend school and she was sent to a Jewish girls’ orphanage in Amsterdam. In March 1938, Margot came to New York with her parents. They immediately enrolled in night school to learn English and went to work – Margot’s mother as a cleaning



The Kirchheimers

woman and her father as a night watchman. Margot's older sister was also able to get out of Holland and come to America in February, 1940, but they were unable to get visas for their other relatives and they were all killed, save for one aunt. Margot knew the moment she met Julius that she wanted to marry him.

Margot is a wonderful knitter and loves to make scarves and sweaters. She is a member of the Chevra Kadisha (the Jewish burial society), a tradition that goes back three generations in her family. She is proud of her children and their accomplishments, and of the ways they each remember the Shoah and the family that was lost.

Margot Strauss Kirchheimer and her daughter Janet Kirchheimer light the next candle.

(A poem by Janet R. Kirchheimer, How I Knew and When, appears on the last page of the issue)

Bernice Sass

Bernice Sass was born Bryna Aidel (Bronya) Epstein on November 28, 1924 in the small Polish shtetl of Skalat (now in the Ukraine). When she was 14, the Russians took control of the region, but then in 1941 the Nazis arrived. However, even before the Nazis' occupation, the local Ukrainians, Bernice's neighbors, began to murder the Jews in a display of solidarity with the Nazis.

Before long, the Epsteins were moved to the local Ghetto where they shared a home with the Sass family and these families became forever intertwined. Around this time, her father was executed when he was exposed as a Jew. Bernice also lost two sisters and a baby niece during the holocaust.

In the spring of 1943, the Ghetto was liquidated and all the remaining Jews were taken to a field outside town, forced to dig a mass grave and then shot. The Epstein and Sass families averted this fate by paying a local gentile to hide them. On the day of the liquidation, this person had them dig a hole in a field and told them that it would be their new "home". This accommodation would last just one day, as on the next day—a Sunday when the streets were filled with churchgoers—he chased them away. Were it not for a wild rainstorm that caused everyone to run in panic, they surely would have been caught.

After that they were hidden by a righteous man named Marco Baranofsky and his family in their attic and barn loft. A suspicious neighbor noticed that Marco's wife was cooking for many more people than were in her own family and alerted the Nazis. Bernice and the others heard Marco swear that he was not hiding Jews, even going as far as to say if they found Jews they could kill him with them. Bernice and her family knew they had to leave. Marco tearfully told them to go his fields where he would be able to provide sustenance. Bernice's mother, despondent and too frail to be moved, stayed behind and passed away soon afterwards.

They survived that winter in a bunker in the woods with several other families. In the spring of 1944, their area was one of the first to be liberated. During the fighting, her brother and one of the Sass brothers were killed.

After the war, Bernice was left to care for her 11-year-old sister, Ruthie. With the Sasses, they eventually made their way to a Displaced Persons camp in Cremona, Italy. There, she and her older

brother who survived the war in Siberia married two of the Sass siblings. Ruthie ultimately married another Sass brother.

After immigrating to the U.S., the Sass/Epstein families became business partners and lived on the same block in Lakewood, New Jersey. They remained fiercely committed to Jewish continuity, teaching their children the importance of remembering the past, while appreciating life's joys. Bernice lost her husband tragically at a very young age. Her brother and his children moved to Israel, but the family remains extremely close. She has had a number of serious health issues in recent years, but remains strong of spirit.

Ultimately Bernice's story is one of triumph, not tragedy. She is a devoted mother of two sons, whose wives are very much Bernice's daughters and treat her with honor, respect and affection. She takes advantage of every opportunity to celebrate and share good times with her family.

As it says in Proverbs, and cited in the last chapter of Avot, "The crown of old age is children's children." Bernice's greatest happiness is from her six grandchildren who are an ongoing source of immeasurable joy, and they all treasure her. She takes enormous interest and pride in each of them. They are committed Jewishly and connected to the land and people of Israel, often moving her to say, "Dos Yiddishkeit gait nisht shtarben mit mir – Judaism will not die with me."

Bernice Sass is blessed to be here today to light a candle with her oldest grandchild Paul Sass, named for her late husband, who is an associate at Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman.



Bernice Sass and grandson Paul Sass at Paul's law school graduation

Jack Ratz's Keynote Speech

I am here to speak to you about remembering the Shoah for the 6,000,000 Jewish victims who were killed by the Nazis. For us, Yom Hashoah (Holocaust Remembrance Day) is 24/7 hours, 365 days a year. We can never forget.

Three weeks ago we made preparations for the Pesach Yom Tov (Holiday of Passover). At the seder (special Passover meal), we read a special passage from the Haggadah (Passover story), "Avodim Hayinu L'Pharoh B'Mityrayim . . ." (we were slaves to Pharaoh in Egypt). I have a second Haggadah wherein I tell my story, "Avodim Hayinu L'Hitler B'Europa . . ." (we were slaves to Hitler in Europe). What was slavery under the Nazis? The slave laborer's fate was to be worked to death as part of the overall plan of the Holocaust, his fate implemented by the Nazi regime as one of their means of destroying the Jewish people; Nazis ideology fought Judaism in all ways. We Jews had tragically suffered the consequences of destructive ideologies physically and spiritually. Nazism regarded religious and secular Jewish culture as its greatest threat.

I am a Jewish survivor of Riga, Latvia, with a pre-war population of 100,000 Jewish residents. On December 8, 1941, the Nazis murdered over 99% of the Jewish population including my mother and brothers. That date is engraved on my ring. I am among the 300 survivors of that ghetto cleansing and was forced to suffer through 2 ghettos, 4 work camps, 2 concentration camps and 2 death marches. I am here today as one who emerged miraculously from the kingdom of death.

I came here as one who miraculously emerged from the kingdom of death. It is the hatred of Jews that culminated in the Holocaust. It started with speeches, then burning our holy books, Torah scrolls, and synagogues, and ended with burning our people. Today, I recall events that took place over seven decades ago, the murder of six million of our people, among them one and a half million children, all denied the right to achieve their life potential.

We must never forget the step by step process of how the hatred of the Jews resulted in the Holocaust. The Holocaust was systematically planned, set and fueled with the aim of killing an entire Jewish nation, extinguishing their culture and extinguishing others deemed unworthy to live. Remember, each one who perished was someone's father, mother, son, daughter, sister, brother and friend, and every single one was a child of G-D. They killed my mother and my brothers "al kiddush Hashem" (in the sanctification of G-d's name).

It was the Nazi government which planned the Holocaust for all Jewish people. Historically, there was never an occurrence where a supposedly civilized nation exhibited such brutal hatred towards another nation to kill over 6,000,000 Jewish people for no reason at all. It was indescribable, and for some unbelievable. The Holocaust will forever stand as a testament to the ability of supposedly civilized and progressive society to treat Jews in the most horrific of ways.

The evil of the Holocaust is singular, yet its lessons are universal. I did not choose my circumstances or trials but I chose how to respond to them. The cruel struggle for survival toughened us as individuals. We will always have a survival mentality for the rest of our lives, because we experienced the worst inhumanities such as hunger, cold, filth and degradation. We were in the pit of hell.



Jack Ratz

For me the Holocaust started on July 1, 1941, and ended on March 10, 1945. I went through hell as a teenager for 44 months and for 1320 days. The memories I have during my incarceration are indescribable and will remain with me for as long as I live. My life was worthless under the clutches of murderers who called themselves the supreme and master race. In the third chapter of Megillat Eicha (Lamentations 3:1), it is written, “Ani hagever ra’ah ani” (I am a man who has witnessed suffering and affliction).

At this junction, I simply highlight how I experienced profound torture and inhuman conditions during the last six months of slavery before my liberation. True, there were no more ghettos or work camps to survive in, only concentration camps and death marches. We were crowded into open box cars, 75-100 slaves in each car, traveling to nowhere for days and sometimes weeks. We were locked up with no food, no medical or toilet facilities in sub-freezing weather without proper clothing – standard operating torture procedures. One miracle I experienced was escaping from a death brigade, charged with exhuming the bodies of the Nazi-murdered victims and burning them to erase any trace of the atrocities. I acquired a capacity for adapting to all kinds of conditions and this is what it meant to have Holocaust high school education.

As a teenager, I left Germany, a country filled with Jewish blood, from a Displaced Person’s camp, and arrived in the United States on November 10, 1947, with \$7 in my pocket given to me by the Hebrew Immigration Aid Society on the army ship. I had no knowledge of the English language nor a profession, but with high hopes, determination, faith, and courage, I strived to live and build a new life, all the while carrying my memories of the tragedies, horror, death and cruelty never witnessed before. Many years have passed since these atrocities took place, but these unhealed wounds keep on bleeding in my heart for as long as I live. Nonetheless, I cannot thank G-d enough for the miracles that occurred to me.

But our journey through the Holocaust as teenagers gave us hope, inspiration, courage and faith and we have survived, thrived and kept our faith. Unfortunately we have survived and live our lives without our pre-war relatives. We were not able to sit shiva (religiously mourn) or say Kaddish (a daily prayer by mourners for deceased family members) for our relatives. We have no cemeteries to go to or tombstones or headstones to mark their graves. Only with our future as survivors can we leave our legacy to future generations. You people are our future generation, you are our legacy. We survived to live lives and raise children and grand children to tell them about our past.

We have written books for the world to remember to honor the sacred dead who were killed by the Nazis and their collaborators, and to try to make a better world for all people of all races. Sadly today, we are a shrinking society of Holocaust survivors who lived through hell yet remained loyal to our faith. We survivors feel obligated to talk about what happened. It is incredible that something like this can happen today when a new Hitler appears on the horizon who casts doubt about our experiences. But, we must promote tolerance and help ensure such acts of hatred never happen again by teaching our young people about the darkest period in Jewish history. So few survived the Holocaust to tell their stories and mourn their loved ones. The few are now left to bear living witness and I am among them. We must take the memory of the Holocaust in our minds and hearts and through Holocaust education, we pass its lessons to our children and future generations everywhere in the world

A famous Jewish philosopher wrote in his introduction, “ I lived my life three times: the first time when I lived; the second time when I wrote my autobiography; and the third time when I translated it.” While writing my book, I too re-lived my incredible survival during the Shoah. I have written my memoir, *Endless Miracles*, from my heart, because the events of the Holocaust can never ever be understood in their totality, in the force of cruelty inflicted on us and our fellow Jews unless we write about our personal experiences. During my imprisonment for 44 months, I gained a lot of experience. My instincts were sharpened and I developed quicker reactions. I also learned to remain silent to survive, while promising myself to speak and write of my experiences should I survive.

It took me many years to speak, write and fulfill the responsibility of sharing my experiences. And all who listen to me speak about my experiences as Holocaust survivor become witnesses too, and will continue my message of the Holocaust. My goal is to help create a society free of hatred and bigotry. There is no time to forget. We remain alert, vigilant and proactive. Because with each passing Holocaust survivor, there is one less voice to say, “I have survived.” The important lessons of the Holocaust must be transmitted to the next generation to insure that what was lost is not forgotten, and to strengthen the resolve of those who will repair and rebuild the world.

As you know, there are Holocaust museums all over the world. I call them monuments to human cruelty. There you find evidence of how the Nazis tortured and eventually exterminated millions of human beings, especially Jews. Today, Holocaust researchers, history professors, teachers, and students are participating in seminars, conferences and workshops all over the world. They study how we were able to survive torture and inhumane conditions. They study how the German nation, which took pride in its high level of culture, medicine, education, and science, between 1933-1945, turned morality on its head with disastrous results. They study how the Germans robbed millions of Jews of their dignity, freedom and eventually their lives.

WE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS are constant reminders of governments who did not act as civilized nations, who closed their borders to people fleeing from death;

WE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS are constant reminders of doctors who participated in and planned the murders of Jews, Gypsies and the disabled;

WE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS are constant reminders of thousands who betrayed their neighbors to the Gestapo for pennies or a bag of sugar;

WE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS are constant reminders of hundreds of train conductors who took the unsuspecting victims in sealed cattle cars to the death camps without giving it a thought;

WE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS are constant reminders of a highly civilized society that turn itself into an evil one, and the paradigm of human indifference; and

WE HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS are constant reminders that the roads to Auschwitz and other concentration camps were paved with the world's silence.

The Nazis could not break my spirit and with the help of G-D I survived. We Jews will survive, because we are an eternal people indestructible and everlasting. The truth is on our side, so we must never be silent in the face of bigotry and hatred. I believe deeply that all people are equal in the eyes of G-d and that all religions deserve respect and help all the world's people live in peace. I conclude by stating that the best way to learn about the history of the Holocaust is not just through books, but also by listening to a survivor who has lived through it. Thank you.

Mr. Ratz welcomes invitations from groups and institutions within the greater Tri-State area to talk about his life and the Holocaust.



How I Knew and When, by Janet R. Kirchheimer

Age 8 – My father hangs upside down on a pipe that was part of a fence that separated our street from the next. All of his change falls from his pockets. He looks so young.

Age 15 – “There were one hundred and four girls in the Israelitisch Meisjes Weeshuis orphanage in Amsterdam. Four survived,” my mother says.
“I remember Juffrouw Frank, the headmistress. She made us drink cod-liver oil each morning. She said it was healthy for us.”

Age 17 – My father tells me his father and sister, Ruth, got out of Germany and went to Rotterdam. They were supposed to leave on May 11, 1940, for America. The Nazis invaded on May 10.

Age 21 – My mother tells me Tante Amalia told her that on the Queen Elizabeth to America in 1947, after she and Onkel David were released from an internment camp on the Isle of Man, she was so hungry she ate twelve rolls every day at breakfast. She said it was the best time she ever had.

Age 24 – My father tells me, “Otto Reis got out of Germany in 1941. He took a train to Moscow, the Trans-Siberian railroad to Vladivostok, a boat to Shanghai, a boat to Yokohama, a boat to San Francisco, and a bus to Philadelphia, his wife and three sons staying behind. Carola Stein signed affidavits for them, but the government said she didn’t make enough money.”

Age 31 – My mother’s cousin refuses to accept money a rich woman left him. He says the money has too much blood on it. My mother tells me that in 1939 her cousin had asked this woman to sign affidavits for his wife and two daughters. She said no.

Age 33 – My father asks me to dial the number. His hands shake. He asks my cousin Judy if she wants to send her three children out of Israel during the Gulf War. She says she can’t let them go.

Age 42 – A waiter in a Jerusalem hotel tells my father he should come to live in Israel, because it’s home. My father tells him, “Home is anywhere they let you in.”



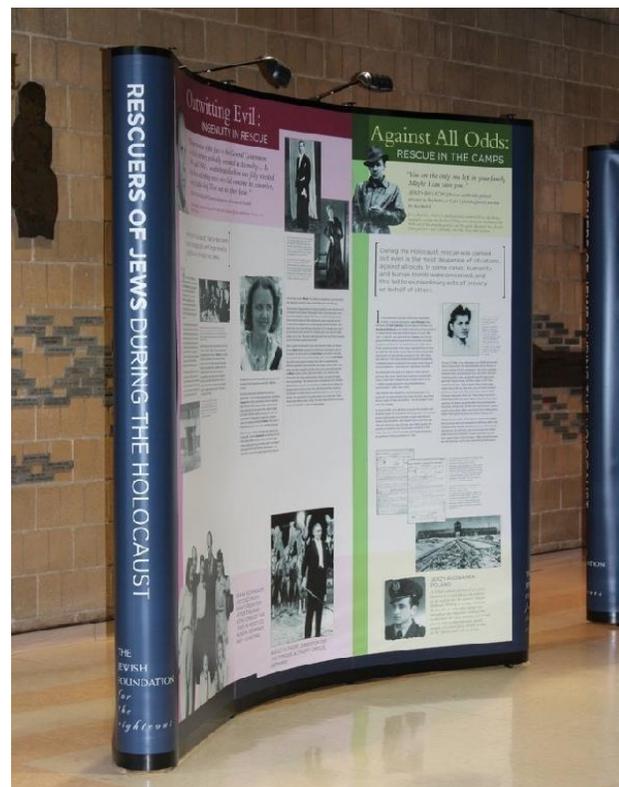
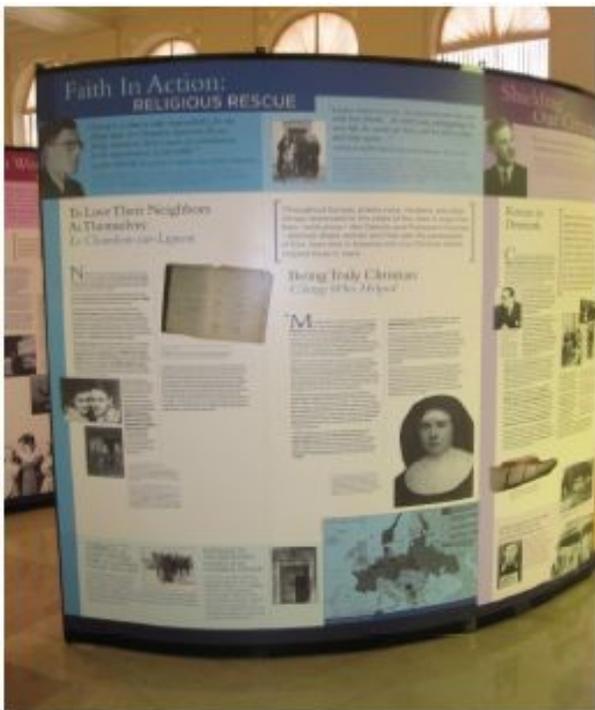
Left to right: Hons. Martin Shulman and Sherry Klein Heitler (Administrative Judge, Supreme Court, Civil Branch, New York Cty.) , Keynote Speaker Jack Ratz, and Hon. Deborah Kaplan.

The 2013 Exhibit: “Whoever Saves a Single Life...Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust”

Each year, a visual exhibit illuminating an aspect of the Holocaust composes an important part of our Annual Holocaust Remembrance Program. The Jewish Lawyers Guild’s invaluable support has enabled us to present our past exhibits, each strikingly displayed in the 60 Centre Street Rotunda—graphics illustrating the discoveries that led one Polish town to restore its abandoned Jewish cemetery, notes of currencies the Nazis printed for death camps, and artworks by camp inmates have each made the Holocaust’s enormity and the complexity of survivors’ experience more real to us.

This year our court showcased *Whoever Saves a Single Life...Rescuers of Jews during the Holocaust*, a multi-media exhibit loaned by the Jewish Foundation for the Righteous, which generously waived rental and insurance fees for the occasion. With freestanding, richly illustrated modules addressing themes such as “Rescue in the Camps,” “Shelter and Hiding,” and others, *Whoever Saves a Single Life* honors and showcases the otherwise ordinary people who risked their lives in Nazi-occupied states to protect their Jewish fellow citizens. Accompanying the exhibit’s modules, film clips of the reunions of the rescued and their rescuers were projected on a screen in the rotunda. Hons. Phyllis Gangel-Jacob and Martin Shulman played key roles in bringing us the exhibit, one of the most moving we have had.

The Jewish Foundation for the Righteous not only preserves the legacies of rare non-Jewish saviors, it provides financial support to over 675 rescuers. We urge readers to visit its website, jfr.org, for an inspiring overview of the foundation’s work.



Just Us Holocaust Remembrance Issue editor: Loren Schwartz