

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

ZACHOR

SPRING 2016

***OPEN HEARTS -
CLOSED DOORS
REVISITED***

TEACHING WITH
THE VHEC TESTIMONY
COLLECTION

*LOOKING BACK ...
MOVING FORWARD:
CELEBRATING 40 YEARS*

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

PLEASE JOIN US

Yom HaShoah

HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATIVE EVENING

WEDNESDAY, MAY 4, 2016 | 7 PM

WOSK AUDITORIUM, JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTRE
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Holocaust survivors are invited to light a memorial candle



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"NO LONGER ALONE"

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

On May 26, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre will hold a very special dinner and program. For the first time in many years, a gala evening — “Looking Back ... Moving Forward” — will honour survivors and provide participants with an example of the vital educational work we do year-round. Robbie Waisman, a survivor of the Holocaust, and Éloge Butera, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, will share their narratives of loss and survival, illustrating for attendees the eyewitness stories we share with more than 25,000 students annually. We hope that the evening will illuminate, even for long-time members and supporters of the VHEC, the breadth of programming and services we deliver.

“Looking Back ... Moving Forward” is an opportunity to do just that. As an organization, we have a great deal of which to be proud. The four individuals who have served as presidents of the VHEC are honorary co-chairs of the event and, through them, we pay tribute to all those whose vision and tenacity has made possible the decades of achievement we commemorate. At the same time, we look forward.

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre has always been very much about the future. We strive for a world free of antisemitism, racism and genocide, with social justice and human rights for all. We remember and commemorate because this history must never be forgotten. But the practical application of remembering is to create a future that is better than the past.

Along with other Holocaust museums and organizations, we are preparing for a future when young people will no longer be able to witness survivors’ first-hand testimony. Fortunately, even before the VHEC was formally founded, Dr. Robert Krell began recording the testimonies of local survivors and we now steward an invaluable collection of more than 200 personal narratives of the Holocaust. As you will learn in this issue, these testimonies are being digitized and resources are being developed to assist educators in employing these materials in classrooms and other educational settings.

Appropriately, for a point in history when we are looking back and moving forward, the current exhibit at the Centre is a revisiting of a project we first developed in 1997.

Open Hearts – Closed Doors explores the arrival in Canada of 1,123 Jewish children orphaned by the Holocaust. It chronicles their survival and the new lives they created in Canada. While much has changed in the world over the past seven decades, the challenge of displaced persons and refugees is, sadly, among the leading challenges facing the world today. Infusing the political and ethical choices of today with the discernment granted by some knowledge of the past is among the purposes of the very relevant work of the VHEC. *Open Hearts – Closed Doors* presents a timely opportunity to reflect on the range of issues around the nature of Canadian immigration policy and the integration of newcomers. It also serves to illustrate the relevance of the past in making contemporary choices, which is at the heart of the work we do.

Thank you for your continuing support of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre during this time of growth, challenge and opportunity. Everything we have achieved, and everything we will do in future, is because we have the support of people, like you, who understand the critical value of this work

Sincerely,



Nina Krieger
VHEC Executive Director

Open Hearts – Closed Doors Revisited

BY PHILLIPA FRIEDLAND



Volunteer docent Belinda Gutman guiding student visitors through *Open Hearts – Closed Doors*, March 2016.

As educators living in a time and place far removed from the destruction wrought by the Holocaust, we are confronted with the challenge of finding appropriate language and pedagogy to make the unimaginable comprehensible. Yet charged with the responsibility to educate and to fulfill the promise of “never again,” I am spurred on by the words Alfred Spiess, the chief prosecutor in the Treblinka trial, shared with his 13-year old son: “They must know.”

In order to facilitate teachers in engaging their students in learning about the paradigmatic genocide of the Holocaust, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre has created a 75-minute interactive, docent-led tour of the exhibit, *Open Hearts – Closed Doors: The War Orphans Project*. This exhibit and the accompanying school program focuses on the children who fortuitously survived the Holocaust — the mere six to 11 percent who managed to hide, or who were selected as slave labourers, instead of facing the instant death that was

the fate of approximately 90% of Jewish children. The essence of the exhibit is captured by the words of the Warsaw Ghetto historian, Emanuel Ringelblum: “Even in the most barbaric times, a human spark glowed in the rudest heart, and children were spared. But the Hitlerian beast is quite different. It would devour the dearest of us, those who arouse the greatest compassion — our innocent children.”

The exhibit recounts the experiences of nine war orphans who were among a group of 1,123 granted permission to enter Canada in 1947 through an Order in Council. This order bypassed Canada’s closed-door, restrictive and exclusionary immigration policy, which had resulted in the admittance of only 5,000 Jews to Canada between 1933 and 1939. The exhibit chronicles the orphans’ journeys from Displaced Persons camps and orphanages in Europe to new and uncertain lives in Canada. These individual accounts of loss, courage and resilience are imbued with the importance

of family and community, and also highlight the efforts of social workers, foster families, and members of the Canadian Jewish community who received the orphans and cared for them upon and after their arrival in Canada.

The focus of this school program is to engage students in understanding both the individuality of Jewish lives affected by or lost in the Holocaust and the cumulative effects of the Holocaust on their communities. The exhibit includes a pre-Second World War map that conveys the cultural, religious and social diversity of the Jewish people by showcasing their longevity and contributions spanning thousands of years in more than 21 different countries.

Students explore the normalcy (religious, cultural and communal) of Jewish life by finding and analyzing family photographs of an affected community from before the Nazi occupation or invasion and then researching the drastic changes in that community following Nazi rule. The program seeks to provide entry-points into discussing individual lives behind the statistics of the Holocaust and the misconception that students may have that the Jews were not people like themselves, but somehow different. The exhibit humanizes the Jewish family by focusing on the experiences of the orphans and their families prior to



Students viewing the exhibit, March 2016.

the Nazi onslaught. The familiar photographs of Leslie Spiro with his family and of Regina Feldman with her classmates in a kindergarten classroom, before their lives were transformed by the events of the Holocaust, compel students to reflect upon the orphans' pre-war daily lives and to find parallels with their own lives.

In stark contrast to its representation of the diversified and wholesome pre-war Jewish family, the exhibit introduces the viewer to the dehumanizing anti-Jewish Nazi legislation and to the subsequent radicalized policies that ultimately led to the isolation, ghettoization and the annihilation of approximately six million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators.

To extend the reach of the exhibit into the classrooms, the VHEC has produced a teaching resource to support participation in the *Open Hearts – Closed Doors* school program. The guide contains pre-visit and post-visit activities that facilitate student engagement with the historical context and personal testimonies in the exhibit,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



Profiles and scrapbooks of local war orphans featured in the exhibit.

Looking Back ... Moving Forward: **Gala Dinner & Program Marks Decades of Achievement**

BY PAT JOHNSON

On May 26, the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre will commemorate four decades of Holocaust education in a special event called “Looking Back ... Moving Forward.”

“This is the first time in many years that the VHEC has held a major evening like this one,” says VHEC Executive Director Nina Krieger. “It is about raising funds to support our work, of course, but it is more particularly about raising awareness, recognizing the achievements of this organization and helping people understand the breadth of the work we do.”

Many people know about some of the work the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre does, Krieger says, yet most people are probably not aware of the many projects and programs produced each year by the VHEC.

The high school symposium program, which has introduced survivor speakers to more than 250,000 young people, began more than 40 years ago, predating the existence of the VHEC itself. This program remains integral to the work the VHEC does, and has perhaps the most visible impact of all. The program is rooted in the past, but it is very much about the future. Through educating the next generations about the Holocaust, the VHEC and survivor speakers strive for a world free of antisemitism, racism and hatred, with social justice and human rights for all.

“This is an important, optimistic message we want to share,” says Krieger.

Guests at “Looking Back ... Moving Forward” will experience first-hand the survivor testimony that the VHEC brings to more than 25,000 high school students every year. Robbie Waisman, a survivor of the Holocaust, and Éloge Butera, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, will address the event. The powerful impact of these men’s stories have changed the lives and touched the consciences of a generation of young people. On May 26, the public is invited to experience the power of their words and extrapolate the effects of the VHEC’s programs on generations of young people. The Master of Ceremonies will be Dr. Art Hister, the son of Holocaust survivors.

The evening will also mark the more than three decades since survivors of the Holocaust, in 1983, founded the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society for Education and Remembrance, and the two decades since those founders realized their goal, in 1994, of a permanent legacy in the form of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre is a teaching museum and a leader in Holocaust education. It is the only educational museum in Western Canada devoted to Holocaust-based anti-racism education. The VHEC produces acclaimed exhibits, delivers innovative school learning materials and teacher training and presents numerous public cultural and commemorative events. Significant museum collections and archives, a survivor testimony project including more than 200 recordings and a library and

resource centre provide scholars and the public with access to Western Canada's foremost resources on the history and legacy of the Holocaust.

"Our incredible team produces thematic museum exhibitions, which travel throughout British Columbia and beyond," Krieger says. "Some are now online, giving them global reach. This is part of an ambitious program now underway to make the vast proportion of our collections available electronically."

"Demand for our services and programs increases each year," says Krieger. "At the same time, along with other Holocaust museums and agencies, the VHEC is preparing for the time when survivors are no longer able to share their first-hand testimony, which makes our audio-video testimonies — going back nearly 40 years — that much more vital and valuable."

The Centre's educational activities, particularly those centered around digitized collections, will be among the beneficiaries of the May 26 event.

The future of the organization, according to Ed Lewin, president of the board of the VHEC, depends on a new generation of people stepping up to continue the work begun decades ago.

"And that is why this event represents a pivotal moment in the history of the Centre," says Lewin. "We are seeing a group of enthusiastic younger supporters moving into leadership roles. This event is coming together because of a very large contingent of volunteers and a remarkable proportion of these people are of a new generation. This is an enormously positive indicator that the next generations understand the importance of the work we do."

"'Looking Back ... Moving Forward' is a rare opportunity for friends and supporters of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre to unite in recognition of the work we do and the powerful impact it has had over a great many years," says Mariette Doduck, co-chair of the event. "We enthusiastically invite everyone to join us for an unforgettable evening."

In recognition of the individuals who have led the organization through its history, the honorary chairs of the event are the four Past Presidents: Dr. Robert Krell, Robbie Waisman, Rita Akselrod and Jody Dales. Event co-chairs, in addition to Mariette Doduck, are Shoshana Krell Lewis and Helen Heacock Rivers.

Pat Johnson is a journalist and communications and development consultant to the VHEC.

A Reminder...

You will soon be receiving an invitation to ***Looking Back ... Moving Forward.***

This is a special dinner and program in support of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

Marking 40 years of Holocaust education, this event at Congregation Beth Israel will provide insight into the breadth of education the VHEC presents, including our outreach to more than 25,000 students and teachers every year.

Mark your calendar for May 26 and watch your mail for your invitation.

Resiliency After Trauma Holocaust Survivor & Psychologist Dr. Peter Suedfeld to Address Yom HaShoah

BY PAT JOHNSON

Dr. Peter Suedfeld has devoted his life to the study of how human beings adapt to and cope with challenge, stress and danger. Yet it was many years into his work that he acknowledged his choice of academic pursuit may be related to his personal life history as a survivor of the Holocaust.

Suedfeld, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of British Columbia, will deliver the keynote address at the VHEC's community-wide Yom HaShoah commemoration at the Wosk Auditorium at the Jewish Community Centre on May 4, 2016.

Through the years, he has often been asked if his research was influenced by his family's experience in the Holocaust. His mother was murdered at Auschwitz; his father survived Mauthausen. Peter was a hidden child in Budapest, living as a Christian in an orphanage run by the International Red Cross.

"My answer always used to be no," he said, "because my research for a long, long time was fairly straightforward experimental psychology, cognition, perception, memory, things like that."

But when he was interviewed for the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre's survivor testimony project, he "put it all together," he says.

"I started to think that maybe there really is a connection, because almost all of my research — not quite all, but most of it — has to do with how people adapt under unusual, extreme, challenging, sometimes traumatic environments and situations," he said.

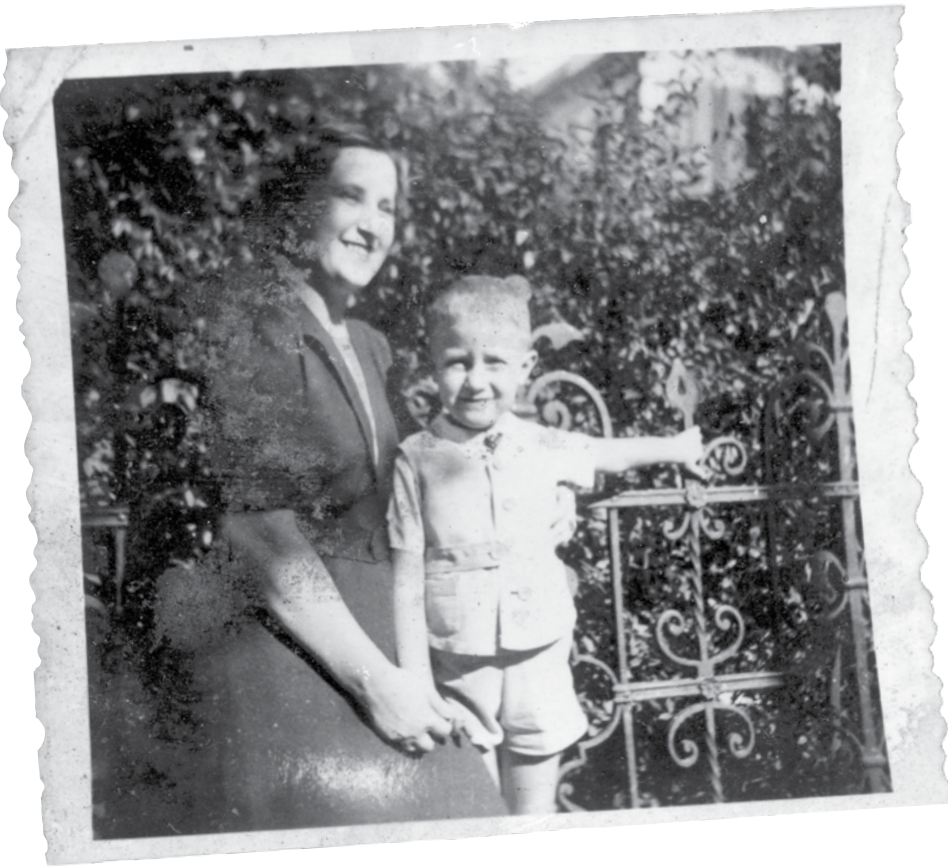
His early work focused on sensory deprivation, looking at how removal of external stimuli affects things like cognition, studying astronauts, cosmonauts and people who work in polar research stations.

"I also started looking at people who were under stress because they had to make really important decisions in stressful circumstances, such as political and military leaders," he said. "I realized that might have had something to do with my own experiences. How do people face unusual, extreme and sometimes dangerous environments, which people who have survived the Holocaust have had to do, including me? But I want to emphasize that at the time I was doing this research, I never thought this way. People asked me why I do all these things, and I said something interests me and I do research on it, that's all, and I have a wide range of interests. But then I thought maybe this does have something to do with my personal history."

At the Yom HaShoah event, Suedfeld will reflect on his personal experience, discuss the Holocaust more broadly and then address the issue of the long-term adaptation of survivors of the Holocaust, a topic on which he has conducted a series of studies.

Suedfeld has reviewed the psychological reports written soon after the war about the long-term potential of survivors to survive and thrive.

"In general, what I found is that the early reports of psychologists and psychiatrists about how permanently



Peter and his mother. Taken at Vajdahunyad Castle, Budapest, Hungary, circa 1939/1940. Courtesy Peter Suedfeld.

Reviewing the early literature and knowing what he knows from personal experience and acquaintance with many survivors, Suedfeld is more surprised by the early negative prognoses than by the remarkable resilience of survivors.

“What did surprise me was the negativity of the scientific reports, which overlooked or ignored or never got to see any of the people who were so resilient,” he said. “There is now a substantial and rapidly growing literature showing not only resilience but post-traumatic growth and people’s strength instead of just emphasizing the weakness. And, again, that’s not to deny by any means that there are some people who were so terribly affected that they haven’t recovered, but that is not the norm.”

Suedfeld also cautions that every experience of survivors is unique.

damaged survivors are, were, to put it bluntly, wrong,” he said. “Yes, of course, some people were permanently damaged and some people could never put their life back together again. But there are a lot of people who did put their lives together or build new ones, who were quite resilient and still are, did well in their occupation or in education if they were young when they came here, have family lives that are certainly no less happy than anybody else’s, are proud of their kids and grandkids if they have any, don’t think about the Holocaust all the time, don’t let it ruin their life.”

Many survivors, he said, have some post-traumatic stress, but not post-traumatic stress disorder.

“Disorder means it really interferes with normal life,” he said. “And very few have that.”

“We talk about the Shoah as though everybody had pretty much the same experience,” he said. “I want to bring home to people that that is also a mistaken idea, that people experienced very different things, all of which are lumped under the label of Holocaust or Shoah, but that’s an incredibly wide diversity of experiences to which an incredibly wide diversity of people responded in an incredibly wide, diverse way, so you cannot talk about survivors or victims as an undifferentiated lump. They’re not.”

Pat Johnson is a journalist and communications and development consultant to the VHEC.

Pedagogical Value of the VHEC Testimony Collection

BY ANDREA WEBB

More than 70 years after the Holocaust, eyewitness video testimonies are assuming more central roles in Holocaust education than ever before. The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre holds more than 200 video testimonies, from eyewitnesses to the Holocaust, in its archival collection. These testimonies were recorded as part of a series of video documentation projects dating back to the late 1970s and continuing today, securing the invaluable role of survivor testimonies in Holocaust education. The current initiative to digitize the testimony collection will develop a sustainable and accessible archive for Holocaust education that will guarantee the safekeeping of the testimonies and increase student and teacher engagement with VHEC educational programs in Metro Vancouver and beyond.

Holocaust testimony provides a connection with people, culture, persecution, and survival. Eyewitness testimonies have proven to be a powerful and effective teaching tool, creating a personal connection to the events of the Holocaust through survivors' accounts of their experiences. Testimonies provide a way for students to connect with survivors' stories and gain an understanding of events that other sources can't give them. As such, testimonies have become one of the most popular methods for teaching about the Holocaust. However, as pedagogical tools, testimonies also require their own special considerations.

Testimony interjects personal, palpable emotion into the often clinical telling of history — a shocking flash of Technicolor — that disrupts the flow of the typical historical narrative. Testimonial narratives do not write a new history; instead they exemplify the effect of historical events upon those who bear witness. Survivors are human beings who endured unimaginable conditions and their testimonies augment the inventory of names and dates that



Outreach Speaker Mariette Doduck addressing students at a VHEC Symposium.

make up many academic textbooks. Unfortunately, the personal nature of testimony makes witnesses hard to place within the “clean” narrative of history that is often presented in history textbooks, leading to a number of challenges in using testimony in teaching.

Teaching the Holocaust requires careful consideration by educators; considerations of the if, the what, and the how as well as the moral implications arising from meaningful engagement with a complex, emotionally wrought event. Many teachers are wary of teaching the Holocaust, even with testimony, as they lack confidence in their subject matter knowledge, they are overwhelmed by the complexity, and they worry about doing justice to such an emotionally charged subject while being sensitive to the learning context, most often with adolescents. Educators and students grapple with the challenges of testimony as a source in the study of the Holocaust, as there is an inherent tension between the intimate, personal narratives and the rigorous, researched histories written by scholars. Textbooks create a collective narrative that is often at odds with the individual memories of survivors. In contrast, each testimony is the account of one person's unique experience, therefore each narrative represents a piece within a much larger puzzle that is tempered by a context.

Students have become used to learning a history that has defined dates and narrative. But this is not the practice of the historian; the historian makes choices and uses interpretive lenses to transform the past into a constructed history. Focusing on key themes, rather than narrowly defined topics, will bring an emphasis on drawing reasonable conclusions rather than focusing on historical minutiae. This approach is aligned with the new British Columbia Social Studies Curriculum and the Historical Thinking Concepts, as articulated by Dr. Peter Seixas and Tom Morton in their book, *The Big Six*.

As part of the Testimony Project, the VHEC is working to support educators and students as they engage with the wealth of newly digitized testimony in the collection. Our expert Teacher Advisory Committee and leading classroom teachers have all offered suggestions on the current needs in classrooms. Based around thematic vignettes, these teaching resources will accompany the testimony collection and act as a portal for educators and students to engage with Holocaust testimony in a lesson, for a larger unit, or as part of an independent research project.

The pedagogy piece of the Testimony Project involves the development, piloting, and sharing of teaching materials built around the digitized testimonies. Connecting with the incoming British Columbia curriculum, the Historical Thinking Project, and the VHEC's wealth of materials, these teaching resources will provide educators with activities and resources for engaging students with Holocaust testimonies. The materials encourage educators to bring together testimonies, artefacts from the VHEC collections, and external, historical resources in order to provide students with a rich understanding of a complex event. The pedagogical value of these materials can serve to help students think more critically about history and primary sources within the context of community and local resources.

The deft educator engages learners through testimony and combines students' emotional responses with historical analysis. Utilizing the VHEC testimony collection will help

educators humanize history, animate the themes in museum exhibits, and connect students with the Holocaust in a way that secondary sources cannot. The testimony project will provide educators with resources and teaching ideas whether they have one class, one week, or one year.

Survivor testimony as a teaching tool encourages educators to take a kaleidoscopic approach to confronting the Holocaust. By reflecting the complexity of historical events, the testimony approach to pedagogy mitigates the danger of distorting and corrupting the historical record, while contributing to the construction of rich historical narratives and a contextually situated collective memory of the Holocaust. It reminds us of the individuality of each survivor's testimony, allowing the witness's testimony to live on with the students, while creating a layered understanding of an historical event.



Outreach Speaker Alex Buckman with students.

We have to prepare ourselves for a time when survivors will no longer be able to visit classrooms or meet with students. While it is impossible to replace the experience of meeting a survivor, the powerful use of testimony can inspire students to inquire, ask questions, and push back against a monolithic narrative of history.

Andrea Webb is the Curriculum Developer for the VHEC's Testimony Project. She has taught Social Studies and English in public schools and Teacher Education at the University of British Columbia. She also designs and delivers professional development programs for educational leaders. She holds a PhD in Curriculum Studies from UBC.

Building a Community — one ‘Google’ at a Time

BY SHARON MEEN

While it seems like only yesterday that *Zachor* published the article “*Mentschlikhkeit*” (January 2008), it’s actually eight years ago, and a lot has happened since. The article described how Manfred Rosengarten, who fled Germany in 1939 for Shanghai and later California, reconnected with his non-Jewish school chums in the early 1980s and wrote regularly to them, in German, until his death in 1987. When Manfred’s son, Andy, donated the letters, which included copies his father kept of his own letters, to the VHEC, I, a bilingual VHEC volunteer, read and summarized their contents for him. In the process, I decided that I must visit this small city for which Manfred had been so homesick. In Themar, I met one of Manfred’s school chums, the children of several others, and many others who remembered the Rosengartens and other Jewish families, and were eager to share their memories.

I learned much on that first trip: between 1862 and 1943, about 30 Jewish families lived in Themar and the community numbered about 100 at any given time (total population: about 3,000). Individual Jewish descendants had visited Themar since the fall of the Wall. However, for the most part, the visitors spoke only English and the Themarens only German or Russian. No ongoing connection between Themar and the families was established, and the visitors did not connect with one another. The idea of creating a bilingual German-English website was born. Its purpose? To connect with

Jewish family members wherever they might be; to bring them into contact with one another, both virtually and actually; and to act as a bridge between the current residents in Themar and family members. In September 2009, *The Jews of Themar: Their Voices Live On* — www.judeninthemar.org — went live.

The results far exceed expectations. Family members find the website — in Uruguay, South Africa, Australia, Israel, and elsewhere. “Hello,” wrote one granddaughter, “I stumbled onto this website a few

weeks ago [...] Finding it has been an amazing piece to a puzzle that I have been trying to piece together for a long time.” “Hi Sharon,” wrote a grandson in Australia, “I just learned my grandfather was born in Themar, not Erfurt as I had assumed. I Googled ‘Themar’ and was somewhat stunned to find your website, which included details on my family background I had been unaware of.” And another son: “While surfing on the Internet, I discovered your website. I sent the link to my cousin in Cape Town. She answered, ‘I am blown away’ — so am I too.”

Family contributions provide the website with amazing riches: for example, the son of Willi Müller, who escaped to Palestine in September 1938, scanned copies of the correspondence received by Willi from his parents from the day after *Kristallnacht* until the eve of their deportation. The grandson in Australia sent 200 postcards that had accompanied his mother on her 1939



Homepage of the Juden in Themar website.

escape to England and then to Australia after the war. All of these documents are available on the website.

Themar Treffen — meetings of family members from all points of the globe, Themarens, and project “groupies” — occur regularly. These started at the first commemorative *Kristallnacht* event held in Themar, in November 2008. In May 2010, we gathered in New York City; a year later, 24 family members spent five days in Themar and environs. The premiere of the DVD of the 2011 events led to a *Treffen* in 2012 in New York, where new members of the virtual community met cousins and others in real time. When the Thüringen state government financed a German version of the English video for classroom use, its 2013 Themar premiere brought us together once again.

And how have today's Themarens responded? In 2008, Themar mayor Hubert Böse welcomed me as Manfred Rosengarten's ambassador and immediately committed his city to an annual *Kristallnacht* event and any support required. His engagement assisted the funding of key projects such as the German video and the acquisition of a permanent multimedia museum installation. Themarens have followed his lead; individuals rummage through personal archives, share their finds, and participate in all the events.

Since 2013, Gunter Demnig, artist of the *Stolperstein* initiative, has come annually to Themar; the first Stolpersteine were laid for the Rosengarten family.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



Letters written by Clara & Max Müller (left & right) to son Willi Müller, December 1938 to May 8, 1942.

and provides an opportunity for further reflection on thematic issues raised during the school program.

The exhibit is enriched with the words of the nine orphans who made Vancouver their home. These young people displayed a resiliency and an ability to adapt that was nothing short of remarkable. Many became not only productive members of the community but also its pillars. An obligation assumed by many of the orphans was, and still is, to facilitate the VHEC's mission of promoting human rights, social justice and genocide awareness by sharing their difficult experiences, in the capacity of outreach speakers, to thousands of students throughout B.C. and beyond.

Robbie Waisman, one of these orphans profiled in the exhibit, states: "One-and-a-half million Jewish children were not as lucky as I was and so I began to think about it and said, 'I made it. I have a sacred duty and obligation to [share my experiences with younger generations] and when I'm doing this I honour the memory of the one-and-a-half million.'"

Open Hearts – Closed Doors was originally developed by and presented at the VHEC in 1997. It is being re-presented nearly 20 years later to provide opportunities for visitors to engage with Canadian immigration policies from a historical perspective and to offer a lens through which to reflect upon Canada's responses to refugees. It compels the visitor to engage in timely conversations about the current global refugee crisis, which confronts us with the fact that, today, one out of every 122 people worldwide are either displaced or internally displaced within their own countries.

Phyllipa Friedland is the Education Coordinator at the VHEC.



"Stolpersteine keep the memories alive." Reuven Mor, grandson of Max & Clara Müller, at laying of Stolpersteine, November 9, 2015.

Schoolchildren and owners of homes previously owned by Jewish families have sponsored the laying of Stolpersteine. The most recent event was on November 9, 2015, when 11 Stolpersteine were laid for two more families. Sixteen family members from Israel, Denmark, Cologne, Israel, Brussels, and the United States joined about 65 Themarens to honour the families. As he left Themar on that raw, rainy November Monday, Demnig commented that it was at a gathering such as this, composed of such a large number of family members and Themarens, *when* he knows exactly *why* he does *what* he does.

And so do I.

Dr. Sharon Meen is an historian at UBC whose research focuses on German Jewish communities and families in the 19th and 20th centuries. She is also a volunteer German-English translator at the VHEC.

A Reflection on Dr. Janusz Korczak

BY LILLIAN BORAKS-NEMETZ



Lillian Boraks-Nemetz in front of the Korczak Orphanage in Warsaw, Poland, 2014. Courtesy Adele Lewin Photography.

Dr. Janusz Korczak was an author who wrote from experience and channelled his thoughts and feelings into stories that characterized and symbolized his concerns with children and society and how one reflects upon the other. He is known to have said that the health of a society can be gauged by the wellbeing of its children. “You cannot even understand a child,” he wrote, “until you achieve self-knowledge. You yourself are a child whom you must learn to know, rear and, above all, enlighten.”

I follow this adage in my creative writing courses and in my own writing because I think that writing from your own experiences can tell you much about yourself, and that it is then easier to create believable characters.

What I have in common with Dr. Korczak, besides writing from experience, is that we were both in the Warsaw Ghetto during the Second World War. He was an aging doctor, and I was a child. My fascination with this man

began on a dreary day in the ghetto, which was literally a prison for Warsaw Jews and where Dr. Korczak fought to keep safe his 200 orphans.

The streets of the ghetto reeked of typhus-ridden bodies of children who had lost their parents due to deportations, disease and starvation. People’s faces looked haunted by fear and deprivation.

On one such day I was in despair. My little secret school, where I loved to go everyday with a group of children who had not yet had a chance to enter the first grade, was no more. I saw across its doors a bar with words on it: *Schule verboten.*

The janitor told my father and me that the two kind teachers who sacrificed their lives and took a terrible chance by teaching in a school that was not allowed to exist were taken to the Pawiak prison as punishment. I peered through the windows into a little cellar room where a few of us had the privilege to learn during those awful days. We learned to use our imagination by drawing and coloring, using the meagre supplies that were available at the time.

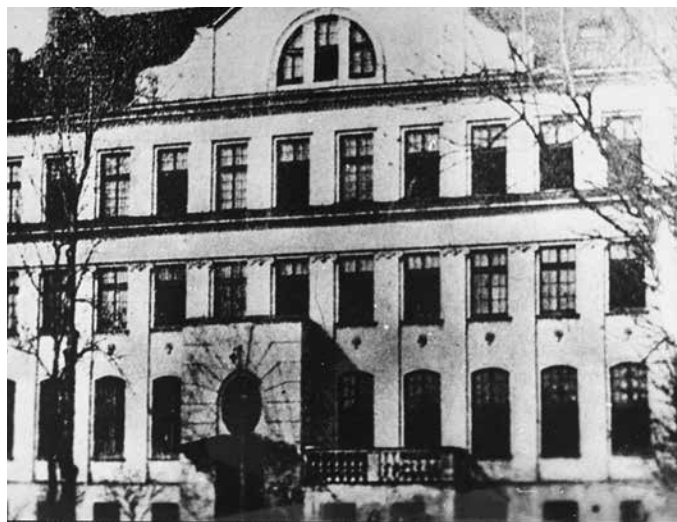
In school we had practised a drill. We sat on little wooden crates with tops on them that came off. We were told that if there was a knock on the door we were to quickly throw all our books into these boxes and leave only the drawings out on the table. The two teachers were lovely young women who treated us children with great kindness but were firm about our work. This went on for a while. Then one day there was banging on the door. As practised, we quickly put our learning materials under our seats.

Two uniformed SS guards stomped in and malevolently pushed the two teachers around, causing the women pain. They shouted in German and stomped out. We children sat frozen with fear for quite some time before the teachers sent us home.

The next day the school was boarded up, and that is what I remembered clutching my father's hand ever so tightly while looking into the cellar through a little window at the now empty grey room where once was life, colour and learning.

I started sobbing and my father put his arms around and said, "Don't cry, I am going to take you somewhere special. We walked awhile through the ghetto's shabby and dangerous streets, often ducking into corners when we saw rifle-bearing soldiers coming towards us. Then we stopped in front of the doors of a building.

"This," my father said, "is the orphanage of Dr. Janusz Korczak. By the way, his name really is Dr. Henryk Goldschmit," he added, and knocked on the door. We stood there in anticipation. The door burst open and one of Dr. Korczak's assistants invited us in.



View of The Children's Home on Krochmalna Street, a Jewish orphanage, established by Janusz Korczak in Warsaw in 1912. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Photo Archives # 65014, Courtesy of Miedzynarodowe Stowarzyszenie im. Janusza Korczaka.

I saw tables where children sat reading, writing and working on projects, just like in my little school that was no more. The assistants were buzzing around helping the little ones. They all seemed happy inside this place, as if the horror of the ghetto and the threat of the always-impending danger did not exist. This was Dr. Korczak's world.

The assistant told my father that the doctor was out on errands trying to get clothing and food for the children. The children looked at us, and some smiled. I knew they were orphans and clutched my father's hand even more tightly. We sat with the children and they showed us their artwork. I had the impression that the doctor also tried to raise the children's spirits during the terrible times in which they lived.

On the street after leaving, my father pointed to a small window on the second floor. There were red geraniums peeking from the windowsill, the only bit of colour on a dreary street. Father seemed to have known that Korczak tried to grow flowers in the ghetto.

My sadness dissipated. Father told me that Dr. Korczak was a warrior whose fight for children's rights never ceased. And that he symbolized hope that, despite what was happening around us, there still was goodness in the world, a goodness that protected us from the evil of the ghetto and the Nazis.

Soon various parts of the ghetto were raided, then closed off and the people deported to the camps. This was the process of elimination and annihilation.

When our building was raided, we were ordered out of our home and onto the street to join a long line of Jewish people. We started walking in this line that was heading for Umschlagplatz, a depot where Jews were gathered and packed into cattle cars headed for Treblinka death camp. Many didn't realize that this was to be their destination and the destination of the ghetto orphans.

My mother held my little sister's hand and I clutched her arm, begging her not to leave me. As luck would have it, there was sudden chaos and shooting in the line-up and someone's arms swept us into an open gate of a building while the line to that Umschlagplatz went on without us. It was my father who saved us. We were lucky.

Not so Dr. Korczak and his children who were destined to walk along the same route. My father told me that Dr. Korczak was a hero.

In his last entry in the *Ghetto Diary*, on August 4, 1942, Korczak writes: "I am watering flowers. My bald head in the window. What a splendid target. He has a rifle. Why is he standing and looking on so calmly?"

The next day, they came for the children of the orphanage.

Dr. Korczak was offered a reprieve, as he had many friends among the Poles. He was told that he didn't have to go, but Korczak refused, saying, "I hate desertion, and besides my children need me."

Father often spoke of that day and how Korczak's 200 orphans were ordered out of the building and made to march through the Warsaw Ghetto with Korczak at the helm holding a small child in his arms and one little one by the hand. They were carrying the green banner of King Matt, the character in his popular book for children about a child king who fought for children's rights with the elders.

In this sad procession, behind Korczak followed the other children and the orphanage assistants. They marched through

the Warsaw Ghetto straight to the Umschlagplatz, where they were packed into cattle cars heading for Treblinka death camp, and where it is said they all perished, probably by gas.

No survivor who was there at that time can forget the long procession. Many wrote about it.

When the war was over, my father couldn't stop telling stories of Dr. Korczak. Especially about how he was with the orphan children, both Jewish and Christian. How he cared for them, taught them democratic principles and upheld their rights. How he often gave them food while himself going hungry.

My father had also taught me many of the principles that Korczak practised and taught his children. When I had my own children, we designated a time after dinner in the family room, where the children were asked to state their complaints and figure out how to best solve their problems in the home so that their rights would be noted and upheld.

And so the Korczak legend carries on to this day. Never has it been more relevant than these times when wars that are sweeping our world cause harm to so many children. It was the children, Korczak wrote, who always had to carry the burden of history's atrocities.

It is my hope that the flame lit by this great man will burn forever in the hearts of all those who love children.

Lillian Boraks Nemetz is a VHEC Outreach Speaker, an award-winning author, an instructor at UBC's Writing Centre and the editor of the "No Longer Alone" page of Zachor.



The final lecture of "How to Love a Child," the Janusz Korczak Lecture Series, takes place at UBC on April 6, 2016. For more information, please visit <http://jklectures.educ.ubc.ca/>

A Black Woman Discovers Her Family Tree's Secret Nazi Roots

BY JENNIFER TEEGE

Jennifer Teege was placed in foster care at age three and adopted at seven, but she maintained contact with her biological mother and grandmother throughout her childhood. When Teege was 38, however, she discovered that her biological mother was the child of Amon Goeth, the Nazi commandant of Płaszów concentration camp — the sadistic SS man portrayed by Ralph Fiennes in *Schindler's List*; Teege's grandmother had been Goeth's mistress during the war. In her memoir *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me*, co-written with journalist Nikola Sellmair and newly translated from German, Teege recounts how this discovery shook her life to the core. In this excerpt, Teege visits the house where Goeth lived while he ran Płaszów.

Carefully I place one foot in front of the other. The floor beneath me sways; the rotten wood creaks and yields under the pressure of each step. It is cold and damp in here; the air smells musty. It's such a squalid place. What's that over there? Is that rat droppings? There is no proper light in here; not enough light, and not enough air either. Carefully I continue walking through my grandfather's house, crossing the dark fishbone parquet into the former trophy room. Amon Goeth once had a sign put up here that said he who shoots first lives longer.

I had wanted to see the house where my grandparents lived. A Polish tour guide whose address I found on the Internet told me that it still stood. A pensioner lives there now, and every now and then he shows individual visitors around. The tour guide called the man and arranged for me to see the house.

In the Płaszów neighborhood of Krakow, the only dilapidated house on quiet Heltmana Street stands out like a sore thumb against the other neat and tidy single-family homes. Some of its windowpanes are broken; the curtains are dirty; the house looks uninvited-in. A large sign on the front of the house says *sprzedam*. For sale. The front door still looks beautiful; the wood is decorated with ornaments, and the dark red paint has faded only a

little. An unkempt man opens the door and leads me up a narrow stairway into the house. My tour guide Malgorzata Kieres — she's asked me to call her by her first name — translates his Polish for me. I haven't told Malgorzata why I am interested in the house; she thinks I am a tourist with a general interest in history.

I look around. The plaster is coming off the walls. There is hardly any furniture. But there is a coldness that creeps into your bones. And a stench. The ceilings are underpinned with wooden beams. I hope the house won't collapse on top of me and bury me beneath it.

Crumbling walls, holding up the past.

Over a year has gone by since I first found the book about my mother in the library. Since then I have read everything I could find about my grandfather and the Nazi era. I am haunted by the thought of him, I think about him constantly. Do I see him as a grandfather or as a historical character? He is both to me: Płaszów commandant Amon Goeth, and my grandfather.

When I was young I was very interested in the Holocaust. I went on a school trip from Munich to the Dachau concentration camp, and I devoured one book about the



Jennifer Teege and her adoptive brother, Matthias.

Nazi era after another, such as *When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit*, *A Square of Sky*, and Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*. I saw the world through Anne Frank's eyes; I felt her fear but also her optimism and her hope.

The history teachers at my high school showed us documentaries about the liberation of the concentration camps, and we saw people who had been reduced to mere skeletons. I read book after book, looking for answers, to find out what drove the perpetrators to act the way they did, but in the end I gave up: Yes, I found some explanations, but I would never understand it completely. Finally, finished with the subject, I concluded that I would have behaved differently. I was different; today's Germans were different.

When I first arrived in Israel in my early 20s, I picked up books about Nazism again. Yet even there, where I was meeting the victims and their children and grandchildren on a daily basis, more important issues soon took over. I had read so much and asked so many people about it — I felt like I knew everything there was to know about the Holocaust. I was much more interested in the here and now: the Palestinian conflict, the threat of war. I had thought I knew it all, but now, at nearly 40, I have to start all over.

One of the first books I pick up is a classic from 1967, *The Inability to Mourn* by Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich. I like their approach; they look deep inside

each person and try to understand without judgment. In their role as psychoanalysts, they regularly dealt with patients who were active members of the SS or other Nazi organizations before 1945. These people did not appear to have any sense of remorse or shame; they and their fellow Germans continued to live their lives as if the Third Reich had never existed. Reading the book with the knowledge of my family history, I think of my grandmother, who denied Amon Goeth's actions until the end.

The conclusion the Mitscherlichs drew at the end of the 1960s was that the Germans had denied their past and suppressed their guilt; ideally, the whole nation should have been in therapy. That conclusion no longer applies to today's Germans.

I also read books by other Nazi descendants, for example by Richard von Schirach, son of Reich Youth Leader Baldur von Schirach, and by Katrin Himmler, great-niece of Heinrich Himmler, Reich Leader of the SS. Their family histories are of great interest to me, and I look for similarities.

And now I am standing here in this dilapidated villa in Krakow. I am not quite sure what I'm doing here, in this house, in this city. Does being here make any sense at all? I just know that I had needed to come to Krakow now. Shortly before I came I was in the hospital — I'd had a miscarriage.

I am feeling sad and exhausted. My therapist advised me not to travel to Krakow in my condition, but I had really wanted to make this trip. First I flew to Warsaw and then I took the train on to Krakow, the city where my grandfather was infamous, where it rained ashes at the end of the war when he had the remains of thousands of people cremated.

I want to see where my grandfather committed his murders. I want to get close to him — and then put some distance between him and me.

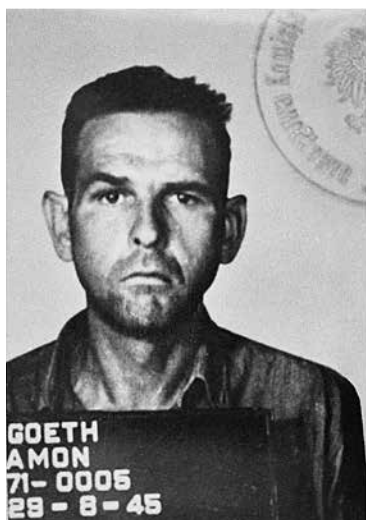
On the ground floor, the old man is now showing me the living room. This is where the parties were held, he says with a sweep of his arm. Here they sat, my grandfather and the other Nazis, drinking schnapps and wine. Oskar Schindler was there, too. The old man leads me onto the patio. He explains that my grandfather had

some building work done, had balconies and patios added. The view of the countryside was important to him, he says.

The house must have been beautiful once; I like the style. Did my grandfather redesign the building himself? Was he interested in architecture like me? Why am I even thinking about whether we share the same tastes? Amon Goeth is not the kind of grandfather you want to find similarities with. The crimes he committed override everything else. In the book about my mother, I read that my grandmother used to gush about Amon Goeth's table manners, even long after the war was over. He was a real gentleman, she said.

Upstairs, the old man unlocks the door to the former bedroom. There are hooks in the ceiling. This is where Amon Goeth did his exercises, the old man claims. Or maybe, he adds with a wink, he had a love-swing hanging from there.

I step onto the balcony and look out over the hills covered in brushwood. A cold wind blows in my face. It is a rainy October day. The camp, surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by watchtowers, was located near the house. My grandfather could keep an eye on his prisoners; in the mornings it was only a short walk to work. That blurred photograph of Amon



Amon Goeth in 1945 and Jennifer Teege.

Goeth on the cover of the book about my mother — his open mouth, the bare chest, the rifle in his hand, wearing only shorts on his balcony — who took that photo? Was it my grandmother? Amon Goeth is said to have been proud of his firearms; he liked to carry them around with him. Did that impress my grandmother, or did it frighten her?

What did she know? What

did she suppress? I cannot imagine her living in this house, yet not being aware of what was happening in the camp. Amon Goeth is said to have beaten his maids. My grandmother must have seen or at least heard that, too. The house isn't that big.

After my arrival in Krakow the previous night, on my way to the hotel, I drove past Wawel Castle, the former residence of the kings of Poland, high above the Vistula. The castle was brightly lit. After the German invasion, Hans Frank, Hitler's governor of Poland, made himself at home there, living a life of luxury surrounded by servants, employing composers and chess players. I can imagine the life he had up there, how powerful he must have felt residing in that grand castle with its view over Krakow.

By comparison Amon Goeth's house looks very normal, almost modest. I had imagined it to be bigger, more ostentatious. I find it difficult to imagine that glamorous receptions were held here and that its owner was a man who was master of life and death for thousands of people. A man who thrived on having absolute power, and who wielded and relished this power in the most cynical way absolutely.

The old man leads me into the basement. "This is where the

commandant stored his wine,” he says. And then he points proudly to a rusty tub: “Amon Goeth’s authentic bathtub.”

Opposite the wine cellar and next to the kitchen was the maids’ room. So this was Helen’s place, here in the basement — Helen Rosenzweig, Amon Goeth’s former Jewish maid from the American documentary I watched on TV the day after I discovered the book.

My mother met Helen here in this house. Ultimately it was a very sad encounter: Helen was shocked because my mother had such a striking resemblance to Amon Goeth. And even though Helen and my mother both try very hard, they cannot form a relationship with each other; history stands between them. Helen sees Amon Goeth in my mother.

In the film, when my mother tries to find an explanation for Amon Goeth’s actions, Helen snaps angrily: “He was a monster. He was smiling and whistling when he came back from killing. He had the urge to kill, like an animal. It was obvious.”

My brother Matthias has given me the documentary on DVD so that I can watch it again and again. At first I focused only on my mother and didn’t pay much attention to Helen. The film begins with my mother writing a letter to Helen asking her for a meeting. In the letter she says that she imagines Helen might be afraid of meeting her — she herself is scared to meet Helen.

At the start, I wasn’t so concerned about the actual contents of the letter. All I could think was, why does my mother spend so much time writing a letter to Helen? Why doesn’t she write to me? Why does she share Helen’s pain but not that of her own child?

Then gradually my feelings faded into the background and suddenly I saw Helen. I saw her, after all those years, returning anxiously to this house that used to be her dreadful prison. I saw how she is still plagued by her memories. She recounts how Amon Goeth used to beat the

maids, how he pushed them down these very stairs, how he screamed at them and called them slut, bitch, dirty Jewess.

Helen’s boyfriend was a member of the Jewish Resistance in the camp and was shot by Goeth. Helen also talks about the man she loved after the war, a camp survivor like herself. They were married for 35 years, moved to Florida and had children. Yet her husband could not get over the experience of the camp, and one day he took his own life. In his suicide note he wrote, “The memories haunt me every day. I just can’t go on.”

I am standing in the basement of my grandfather’s house, in the darkness of Helen’s room, where the only light comes from a small window. You can see a small patch of the garden. It was warm here; she didn’t have to sleep on straw in the drafty barracks and was certain to have had more to eat than the other detainees. She didn’t have to perform hard labor in the quarries like most of the other women in the camp; she wore a black dress with a white apron and served roast meat and wine. Yet she was living beneath the same roof as the man who could kill her at any time. She expected to die in this house.

They called Goeth the “Butcher of Płaszów.” I keep on asking myself how it was that he became that way. I don’t think that it was his childhood or even his hatred of the Jews. I think it was much more banal than that: In this world of men, killing was a contest, a kind of sport. It reached the point where killing a human being meant nothing more than swatting a fly. In the end the mind goes completely numb; death has entertainment value.

I have a terrible image in my head, which used to haunt me even in my sleep: It is said that Amon Goeth once caught a Jewish woman who was boiling potatoes in a large trough for the pigs — just as she, driven by hunger, ate one of the potatoes herself. He shot her in the head and ordered two men to throw the dying woman into the boiling water with the potatoes. One of them refused, so Goeth shot him, too. I don’t know if this story is true or

not, but I cannot get the image of this half-dead woman thrashing around in the boiling water out of my head.

These stories of how Amon Goeth considered himself superior, how he played music to accompany executions, used scarves and hats as props for his killings, how he played the master in his pathetic little villa — it would be comical if it wasn't so sad. He was a narcissist — but not just in the sense that he was in love with himself. He was a narcissist who felt on top of the world when he humiliated and degraded others.



The memorial for the victims of the Płaszów camp.

My grandmother was never bothered by my skin color.

She always seemed delighted to see me when I came to visit. No matter how little I was at the time: Children can sense if someone likes them, and she liked me. I've always felt so close to her. Yet she also held Amon Goeth when he came back from his killings. How could she share her bed and her home with him? She said she loved him, but is that a good enough excuse? Is it good enough for me? Was there anything lovable about Amon Goeth — is that even a permissible question?

I read that my grandmother used to idolize him: handsome Amon Goeth, the man of her dreams.

This is juxtaposed to the image of him that contemporary witnesses have painted: quick-tempered, cruel, irascible. His dogs. His exaggerated masculinity: commanding, dominating. Uniform, discipline, Fatherland.

My mother always saw the father in him, too, not just the concentration camp commandant. She is much closer to him than I am, even though she never met him. She was still a baby when he was hanged. Survivors of the camp have told her again and again how much she looks like him. How dreadful that must have been for her.

Do I look like him? My skin color is like a barrier between us. I imagine myself standing next to him. We are both tall: I am 6 foot, he was 6 foot 4 — a giant in those days.

He in his black uniform with its death-heads, me the black grandchild. What would he have said to a dark-skinned granddaughter, who speaks Hebrew on top of that? I would have been a disgrace, a bastard who brought dishonour to the family. I am sure my grandfather would have shot me.

When I look in the mirror I see two faces, mine and his. And a third, my mother's.

The three of us have the same determined chin, the same lines between the nose and the mouth.

Height, lines — those things are only external. But what about on the inside? How much of Amon Goeth do I have in me? How much of Amon Goeth does each of us have in us?

I think we all have a bit of him in us. To believe that I have more than others would be to think like a Nazi — to believe in the power of blood.



Excerpted from *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me: A Black Woman Discovers Her Family's Nazi Past* by Jennifer Teege and Nikola Sellmair. Available wherever books are sold.

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The ‘Thirsty Bloodhound’

BY BARRY DUNNER

Remember what the Amalekites did to you along the way when you came out of Egypt. When you were weary and worn out, they met you on your journey and attacked all who were lagging behind; they had no fear of God. When the LORD your God gives you rest from all the enemies around you in the land he is giving you to possess as an inheritance, you shall blot out the name of Amalek from under heaven. Do not forget! – Deuteronomy 25

I feel compelled to put to paper my mother’s recollections of Amon Goeth for this issue of *Zachor*. Why now? Because Jennifer Teege, the granddaughter of Amon Goeth will be in Vancouver as part of the Chutzpah Festival. She will be speaking about what it is like to be the granddaughter of Amon Goeth. As a counterpoint to Ms. Teege’s personal journey, I am relating my mother’s experiences of what it was like for her to have been a prisoner at Płaszów, under the command of Amon Goeth.

The Torah commands us to blot out the memory of Amalek, yet at the same time: not to forget. Similarly, I am torn between not offering a platform for Goeth to be remembered and the opportunity to tell Else’s story. I know that my mother would have wanted me to ‘*Schreib und farschreib*’ — to write and record her memories of Amon Goeth and Płaszów.

It’s difficult to fathom the horrors of the Holocaust. At Passover Seder I ask guests if they have ever met a slave. When I tell them that my mother was once a slave, they find it hard to believe. Interestingly, one of Else’s favourite Jewish holidays was Passover — it mirrored her Holocaust experiences and most vividly and dramatically represents the triumph of freedom over slavery, of humanity over inhumanity.

Long before Schindler’s List appeared in print and in movie theatres, mom was telling her stories to anyone who would listen: to the Czech salesman at the Toyota dealership where I bought my first car to the Polish plumber who repaired our fixtures. She spoke of the humanity in the camp despite the

horrific conditions: of how the women knitted socks and sweaters for those without protection from the elements; of the terribly cold winter months; of the lack of food and near starvation; of the unsanitary conditions; of the lice, pneumonia, dysentery.

Else told most of her stories with a calm demeanor — that is until she began speaking about Amon Goeth — who she referred to as a “thirsty bloodhound.” We naturally think of Auschwitz as the ultimate expression of evil. Yet, I would venture that Else’s most vivid and terrifying memories were those that occurred in Płaszów under the leadership of Amon Goeth.

Else Dunner (née Krieger), was born in Bielsko, Poland, on December 18, 1913. She met her husband to be, Karol Zimmerspitz, in the early 1930s and they married in January 1939. Karol was an engineer, who managed the family lumberyard in Krakow, which is where the newly married couple took up residence.

Shortly after the war broke out, Else and Karol were placed in a ghetto in the Krakow suburb of Podgorze, just on the other side of the Vistula River. (Think of the proximity of Richmond to Vancouver.) Three families were crammed into what today would be considered a one-bedroom apartment. In 1943, Else and Karol were sent to the concentration camp, Płaszów, which, is another suburb of Krakow.

The commandant of Płaszów was Amon Goeth. If you have seen the movie Schindler’s List, then you will recognize his character, skilfully portrayed by Ralph Fiennes. Else was a

prisoner at Płaszów for about one year. Highly unpredictable, Else knew to steer far away from Goeth — a tall and imposing figure. His Nazi uniform, black leather boots and general demeanour, was powerful and foreboding, mom recalled. If seen on his veranda or staring out from his office window, prisoners would scurry like mice for cover. Else quickly learned how to become invisible.



Else Dunner. Courtesy Barry Dunner.

Płaszów was a small camp: there were 25,000 prisoners or more at any given time. Naturally, rumours would travel quickly among the prisoners. One fine day, as Else liked to say, rumours spread like wildfire that a young man had escaped. This news lifted spirits and brought great hope. Within a few days rumours once again spread throughout the camp. The young man had been captured while hiding in the countryside. This news was confirmed as a gallows was soon built.

On execution day, all prisoners were ordered by Goeth to witness the hanging, as a warning as to what would happen to anyone who dared attempt to escape. As the prisoners gathered outside to witness the spectacle, by chance, Else ended up close to the front of the line and within earshot of Goeth and the young man. With the noose around his neck the youth stared defiantly at Goeth and said: "You may kill me today, but your day will come. You will not be victorious." He then recited the Shemah: Shemah Yisrael, Adonay Eloheinu, Adonai Echad. And with that utterance hanging in the air, he was executed.

This experience had a profound effect on Else. She often recounted it to the high school students at the Vancouver Holocaust Symposium.

Else also made sure to tell the students of Goeth's fate. When Płaszów was liquidated, Goeth was stripped of his rank of Captain and ordered to report to the Russian Front. Goeth refused to do so and was on the run. Several months later, having made it on to "Schindler's list" (but that's another story, as mom would say) and having survived Auschwitz, Else

wound up in Brunnlitz, a sub camp of Gross Rozen, as one of 1,200 workers in Schindler's enamel factory. One fine day rumors were abound that Goeth would be at the factory and meeting with Schindler. The workers were on edge. Was Goeth seeking asylum? Was Schindler going to help him?

At one point in the day, Schindler gave Goeth a personal tour of the factory floor. Now, upon seeing the man, the fear in the prisoners'

hearts washed away. He was gaunt and on the run, no longer in his captain's uniform, no longer tall and proud. Mom told me that she believed that Schindler purposefully escorted Goeth through the factory so as to show everyone that Goeth was now harmless and would never again be a threat.

Goeth was arrested by the United States military in May of 1945. He was extradited to Poland, placed on trial and hung on September 13, 1946. His last words were "Heil Hitler." The hanging did not go well. It took three attempts to execute Goeth, as the rope was too short. His body was cremated and his ashes were dispersed along the Vistula River.

Else once wrote: "Yes, I can say that I am fortunate to have so many nice memories of my early years of life. But I consider myself even more fortunate that I am a Survivor of the Holocaust. [That I] survived the ghetto, concentration camp and Auschwitz; that I managed to get out of Poland and became a Canadian; and can tell my story and bear witness of the Holocaust."

In the spring of 2000, Else was dying of cancer. My sister, Chana Wasserman, flew in from New York to spend what little time she had left with her. On the Evening of April 26, Chana tucked mom into her bed and, in accordance with Jewish tradition, recited the Shema to her. Else went to sleep peacefully and did not wake up. It was the 7th night of Passover.

Barry Dunner is the son of Holocaust survivors Sam and Else Dunner. He has volunteered for the VHEC on many occasions in support of the Centre's educational and outreach activities.

SEPTEMBER 18, 2015 – FEBRUARY 29, 2016

GET WELL

Neil Kornfeld, Speedy recovery.
Debby & Mark Choit

Bud Riback, Speedy recovery.
Gloria & Robbie Waisman

Neri Tischler, Full and speedy
recovery. The Micner Family

Gloria Waisman, Speedy recovery.
Alex & the child survivors

David Huberman, Hoping you
recover quickly. Peter & Marla
Gropper

MAZEL TOV

Gloria Ross, In honour of your
special birthday. Lillian Boraks-
Nemetz

Roger Lyons, In honour of your
award. Gloria & Robbie Waisman

Louis Sholzberg, Happy Birthday.
Eddie & Debbie Rozenberg &
Family

Myrna Rabinowitz, On your 70th
birthday. Bev Spring & Alan
Morinis

Peter Gropper, On turning 70.
Beth & Leon Bogner, Shana & Alan
White

David Ehrlich, On your 89th
birthday. Richie & Faye Elias

Mrs. Ruth Wolochow, Happy
Birthday. Ida & Odie Kaplan

Cathy Golden, Happy Birthday.
Ruth & Andrei Brucar, Lynn &
Larry Moss, Janine & Boris
Chenkis, Jacquie & Paul Watson

Mike & Sami Wall, On the birth
of your daughter. Allan Black &
Roberta Beiser

Norman Gladstone, On your
retirement. David & Allen Herman

Ken Sanders & Family, On your
new arrival. Rita Akselrod

Beth Bogner, On this very special
birthday. Morley & Fay Shafron,
Phyllis & Michael Moscovich,
Karyn & Joe Gold

Rome & Hymie Fox, On the birth
of your first grandchild. Rita
Akselrod, David & Cathy Golden

Beth & Leon Bogner, On the
birth of your granddaughter,
Lea Jeanelle. Marilyn Moss,
Phyllis & Michael Moscovich

Dan Cohen, Happy 85th Birthday!
Shoshana & Moshe Fidelman,
Rosa & Nora Ferera Pullmer & Lew
Pullmer

Birgit Westergaard, On your 70th
birthday. Eve Camerman & Ian

Ricki Thal, Happy Birthday and
New Year. Harold & Marla
Groberman

Robbie Waisman, Happy 85th
Birthday! Marilyn & Derek Glazer,
Morley & Fay Shafron,
Pat Johnson

Renee Belzberg, Happy 75th
Birthday. Lana & Mendy Landa

Morley Shafron, On your 80th
Birthday. Gloria & Robbie
Waisman

Wendy Long, On your induction
into the BC sports Hall of Fame.
Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Eddie Israel, On your 85th
birthday. Ivan & Merle Linde

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, On the
wedding of your granddaughter.
Alex & Colette Buckman

Linda Wener, On your Birthday!
Beth Bogner

Yolanda & Marc Babins, On the
birth of your first grandchild.
David, Cathy, Tyler & Shane
Golden

Netty Krevela, On your
accomplishments. Amalia
Boe-Fishman & Family

Carrie Diamond Happy birthday.
Beth & Leon Bogner

Katy Runacres, Mazel tov &
Happy 27th Birthday! Melissa
Matthews

Rosie Haynes, Happy 27th
birthday. Melissa Matthews

Anita Rudolph, Happy special
birthday. Leslie, Tarryn, Jenna,
Carly & Brett, Anonymous

Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt, In
honour of your daughter's Bat
Mitzvah. Belinda & Sam Gutman

Ben Folk, On the birth of your
great-grandson. Ida & Odie
Kaplan, The Micner Family

Roman Raivich, Happy special
birthday. Art Toft

Perry & Marilyn Ehrlich, On
Mandy & Alexi's wedding. Nadine
& Brian Katz

Shoshana & Shawn Lewis, On
Mattea's Bat Mitzvah. Shana &
Alan White

Al Dexter, On your recent special
Birthday! Mark Rozenberg

Moshe Fidelman, On your new
home. Nancy & Maurice Benyaer

SYMPATHY

Gary & Linda Cohen & Family, On
the loss of your father, father-in-
law & grandfather. Karen & Les
Cohen & Family

Alissa Horii Rogachovsky & Bram
Rogachovsky & Family, On the loss
of your mother, mother-in-law &
grandmother. Dana & Matthew
Ross, Robert & Marilyn Krell

Helen Coleman, Sorry for your
loss. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Dianne & Ron Winick, On the loss
of your brother & brother-in-law.
Helen Alko

Sally & Sidney Coleman, On the
passing of your brother. Susie
Micner, Sam Micner, Fay Weiss &
Family.

Josephine Nadel, On the loss of
your mother. Neri & Aron Tischler

David & Lisa Woogman & Family,
In memory of your Aunt Mollie.
Marilyn & Perry Ehrlich & Family.

Ruchama, Frieda & Sol Goldstein
& Family, On the loss of your Aba.
Evelyn Kahn & Family

Udi Klapova & Family, In memory
of your beloved mother. Tamar &
Gary Lowy

Danya & David Fugman, In memory
of your mother and mother-in-
law, Margaret. Eddie & Debbie
Rozenberg & Family, Neri & Aron
Tischler

Isaac & Judy Thau, On the loss of
your Uncle Norman. Neri & Aron
Tischler

Debbie & Robert Israel, In
memory of Esther. Eddie & Debbie
Rozenberg & Family

Cynthia & George Bluman, In
memory of Esther. Eddie & Debbie
Rozenberg & Family

Lisa & Gabe Milton, In memory
of Gabe's father, Jeffery Milton.
Eddie & Debbie Rozenberg

Raquel Hirsch, On the loss of your
Mother. Sylvie & Mark Epstein, The
Micner Family. Robert & Marilyn
Krell

Jason Kurtz, In memory of your
father. Al Szajman

Rina Vizer, With sympathy. Gene
& Alice Fossner

TRIBUTE CARDS

George Vizer, In memory of your mother, Edith Vizer. Marea & Jeff Kahn, Andi & Marc Babins, Stuart & Linda Silver, Howard & Susan Reichbart, Jenny & Tom Marx, Eli's Cheesecake Company, Repro Products Inc.

David & Grace Ehrlich, On your loss. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

Gary Lyons, On the loss of your sister. Gloria & Robbie Waisman

Naomi Mills, On your loss. The Micner Family

Minnie Segal, In memory of Marcel. Gloria & Robbie Waisman

Anne Andrew, On the loss of your mother, Alice. Sarah Richman

Arthur & Phyllis Hister, On the loss of your mother, Pola Hister: Bram & Alissa Rogachevsky, Marla Guralnick & Joshua

Pekarsky, Frieda Miller & Danny Shapiro, Rome & Hymie Fox, Phyllis & Michael Moscovich, Bev Spring & Alan Morinis, Gloria Altman, Rosamund & Michael Goldberg, Robert & Marilyn Krell, Peter & Marla Gropper, The Micner Family

In memory of Pola Hister. Art Hister & Phyllis Simon

In honour of Avrum Costin. Jeremy & Sarah Costin

In memory of Harvey Norden. Jeffrey Norden

Jacques Mydlarski, On the loss of your mother. Gloria & Robbie Waisman

Paul Becker, On the loss of your mother. Neri & Aron Tischler

Valerie Diamond, On the loss of Issy. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, Marla & Peter Gropper

Avi Dolgin. In memory of Ruth Hess-Dolgin. Ron & Estarisa Laye

Dr. Benny Eichhorn, In sympathy. Evelyn Kahn

Gerry & Andrea Zimmerman, In memory of your mother and mother-in-law. Jack and Karen Micner & Family, Aron, Sam and Al Szajman

Linda Tenenbaum & Family, In memory of your mother, Molly. Neil & Judy Kornfeld, Beth & Leon Bogner

Morris & Kathy Gordon & Family, In memory of Harry. Judy & Neil Kornfeld

Effie Gordon, In memory of Harry. Neil & Judy Kornfeld, Art Szajman, Murray Fraeme

Mrs. Barbara Lever, On the loss of your husband. Sally Berry

Phyllis Saadon, In memory of your aunt. Ida & Odie Kaplan

In memory of Sara Malka Brawer (née Klecel), Bayla Klecel, Chana Klecel, Eliezer Klecel and the Klecel family. Norman Gladstone & Dr. Larry Wine

THANK YOU

Dr. Marty Braverman, Thank you. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, With appreciation. Kit Krieger

Stan Taviss, With thanks & appreciation. Tom Szekely

Robbie Waisman, In appreciation of your talk to UBC Hist 441. Richard MenkisDavid Ehrlich, With appreciation. Kit Krieger

THANK YOU VHEC VOLUNTEERS!

OUTREACH SPEAKERS

Janos Benisz, Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, Alex Buckman, Mariette Doduck, David Ehrlich, Serge Haber, Jannushka Jakoubovitch, Chaim Kornfeld, Robert Krell, Inge Manes, Bente Nathan Thomsen, Peter Parker, Claude Romney, Martha Salcudean, Louise Sorensen, Peter Suedfeld, Tom Szekely, Robbie Waisman; Coordinator: Rita Akselrod

SPECIAL PROJECTS

Bonnie Elster, Lise Kirchner, Kit Krieger, Ella Levitt, Gerri London, Jack Micner, Meredith Shaw, Jennifer Sin, Stan Taviss, Gloria Waisman

DOCENTS

Julia Bernhardt, Stephen Cook, Reva Dexter, Myriam Dinim, Sylvie Epstein, Eli Friedland, Belinda Gutman, Dalit Har Tuv, Helen Heacock Rivers, James Highet, Avi Horwitz, Charlotte Katzen, Dodie Katzenstein, Dina Kaufman, Lise Kirchner, Uma Kumar, Lucien Lieberman, Ivan Linde, Ellen Millman, Zachary Mullin, Herb Mills, Cathy Paperny, Jessica Passey, Evelyn Ray, Meredith Shaw, Gita Silver, Vivian Tsang, Rina Vizer, Anita Willson

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Our apologies for any errors or omissions

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2016 Chutzpah!

A JOURNEY OF SELF-DISCOVERY

JENNIFER TEEGE (GERMANY)

SATURDAY, APRIL 2, 2016 | 8 PM

NORMAN & ANNETTE ROTHSTEIN THEATRE
950 WEST 41ST AVENUE

Author Jennifer Teege will be in conversation with *The Globe and Mail's* Western Arts Correspondent Marsha Lederman, sharing her unique story with us as told in her new memoir, *My Grandfather Would Have Shot Me: A Black Woman Discovers Her Family's Nazi Past* (co-written with journalist Nikola Sellmair and newly translated from German).

A German-Nigerian woman named Jennifer Teege thought she knew who she was. One day she randomly picked up a library book from the shelf. In that book, she recognized photos of her mother and grandmother – and from that book, she learned a horrifying fact that no one had ever told her. Amon Goeth, the Nazi "butcher of Płaszów" who was chillingly depicted by Ralph Fiennes in *Schindler's List*, was her grandfather.

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