VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

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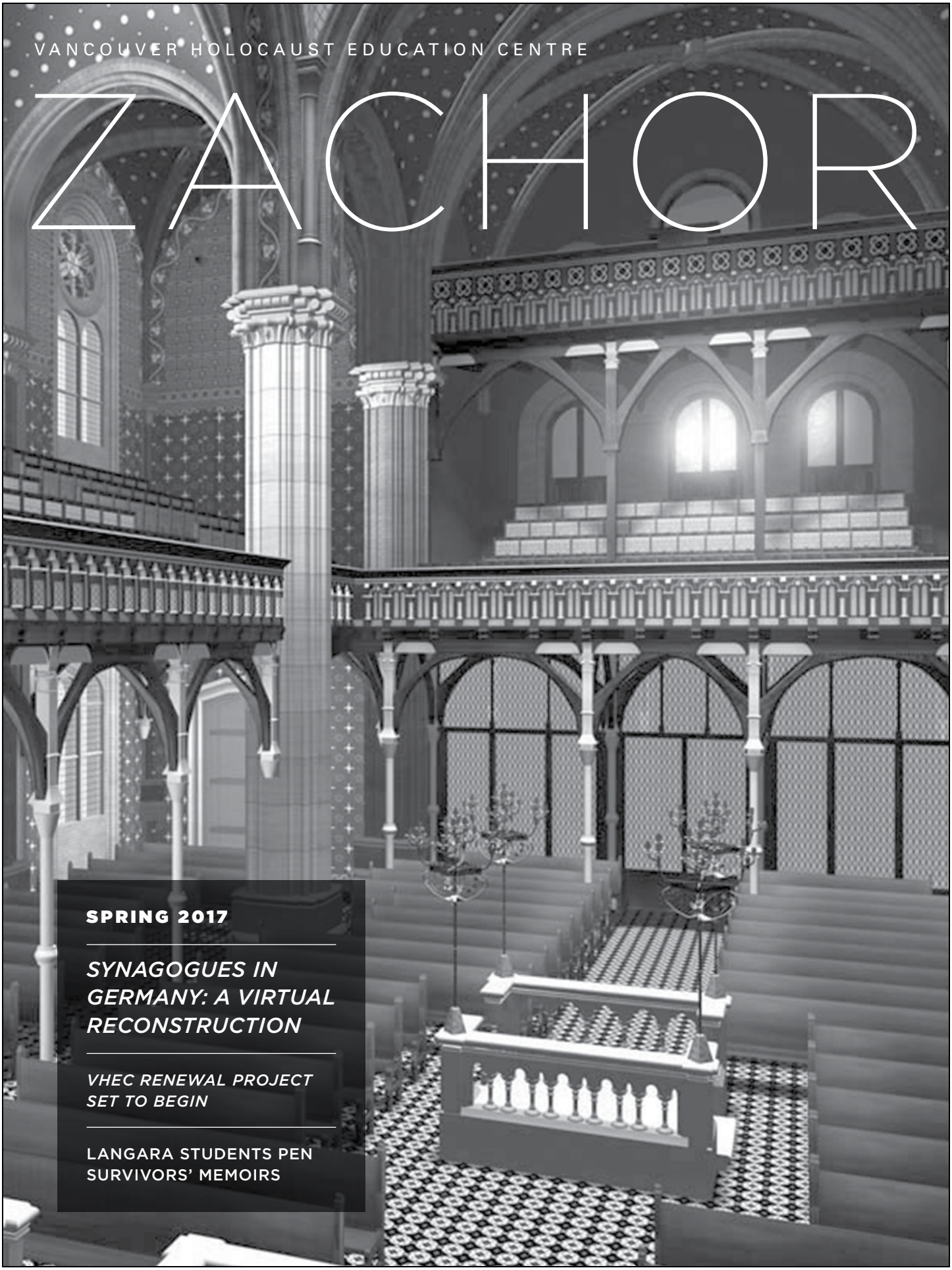


SPRING 2017

SYNAGOGUES IN GERMANY: A VIRTUAL RECONSTRUCTION

VHEC RENEWAL PROJECT SET TO BEGIN

LANGARA STUDENTS PEN SURVIVORS' MEMOIRS

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

604.264.0499 | INFO@VHEC.ORG

SPRING 2017

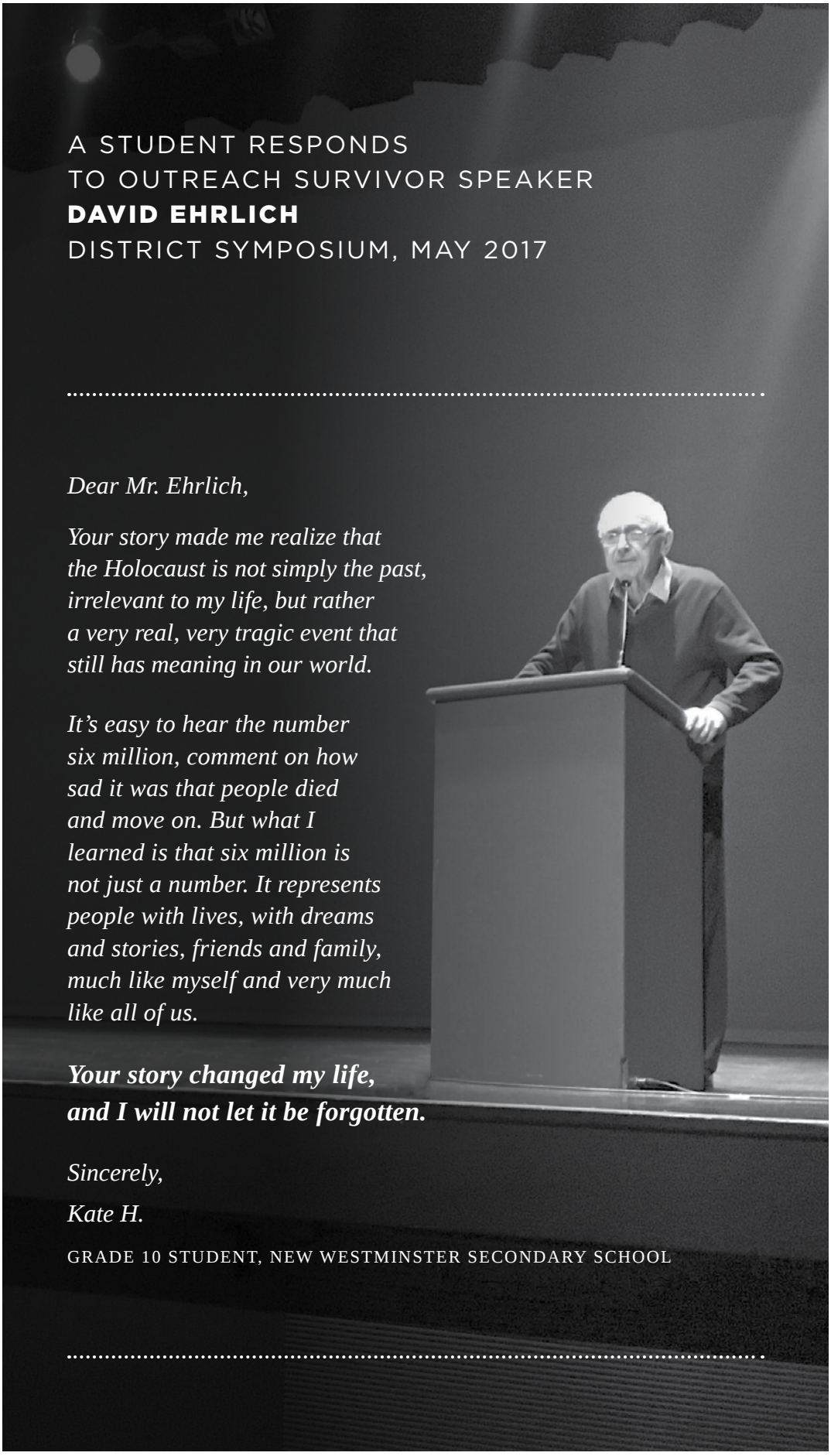
ZACHOR
Remember

EDITOR
Nina Krieger

EDITOR,
"NO LONGER ALONE"
Lillian Boraks-Nemetz

DESIGN
Illene Yu

Cover: A virtual reconstruction of a synagogue in Hanover, Germany, by the Information and Communications Technology Section of the Technical University of Darmstadt's Architecture Department. It is part of a project that uses computer-aided design to virtually reconstruct synagogues destroyed during the Nazi era.
See story, page 5.



A STUDENT RESPONDS TO OUTREACH SURVIVOR SPEAKER **DAVID EHRLICH** DISTRICT SYMPOSIUM, MAY 2017

Dear Mr. Ehrlich,

Your story made me realize that the Holocaust is not simply the past, irrelevant to my life, but rather a very real, very tragic event that still has meaning in our world.

It's easy to hear the number six million, comment on how sad it was that people died and move on. But what I learned is that six million is not just a number. It represents people with lives, with dreams and stories, friends and family, much like myself and very much like all of us.

Your story changed my life, and I will not let it be forgotten.

Sincerely,

Kate H.

GRADE 10 STUDENT, NEW WESTMINSTER SECONDARY SCHOOL

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO OUR READERS

Individuals who had witnessed and experienced some of history's worst inhumanity found the optimism to launch this organization, confident that remembering and educating about the past is the surest path to a better future.

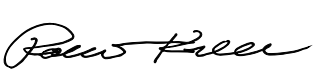
Current events may challenge our positivity. Yet the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre was founded precisely for times like these.

We know that the future can be bright, because thousands of students' letters and comments, like the letter from Kate H., on the preceeding page, tell us that attending a VHEC symposium — and hearing the first-hand testimony of a survivor of the Holocaust — has changed their worldview.

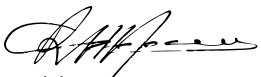
The VHEC educates young people — and reminds people of all ages — that each of us is an individual with the power to influence the world and, collectively, we have the ability and an obligation to pursue justice.

When the news is discouraging, it is time to act. The work of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre is as important now as it has ever been.

As always, we depend on your support. Thank you for your generosity.

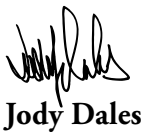


Dr. Robert Krell
FOUNDING PRESIDENT, 1983-1998



Robbie Waisman
PRESIDENT, 1998-2004

Rita Akselrod
PRESIDENT, 2004-2007



Jody Dales
PRESIDENT, 2007-2010

Ed Lewin
PRESIDENT, 2010-2016

Philip Levinson
PRESIDENT, 2016 - PRESENT

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre envisions a world free of antisemitism, discrimination and genocide, with social justice and human rights for all.

PLEASE DONATE ONLINE AT WWW.VHEC.ORG OR CALL 604.264.0499. THANK YOU.

VHEC Renewal Project: An Overview

BY NINA KRIEGER AND PHILIP LEVINSON

It is more than two decades since the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre opened its doors. The Centre has seen impressive achievements during this time.

We have made lasting, positive impacts on the lives of Holocaust survivors, providing a place to remember, mourn, socialize and access services.

The VHEC has introduced generations of students to the lessons of the Holocaust and inspired them to value social justice and human rights.

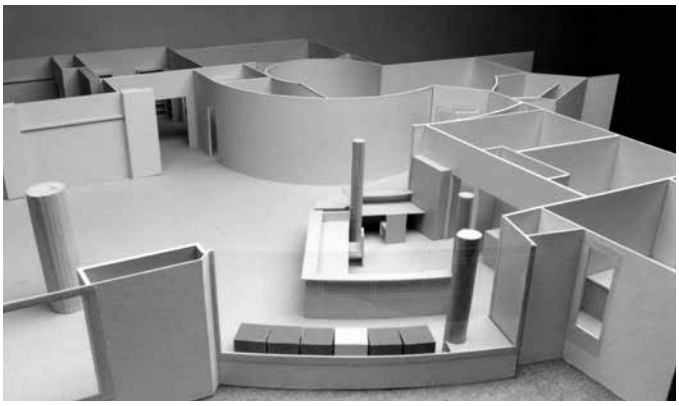
We have strengthened the abilities of educators to teach this complex history in age-appropriate ways, through professional development opportunities, outreach programs and in-class materials like book sets and "Discovery Kits."

The Centre has presented 57 exhibitions, more than half of them original projects and many incorporating aspects of local or Canadian history, supported by archival materials and museum artefacts.

Through VHEC symposia and outreach speakers programs, tens of thousands of young British Columbians have heard eyewitness testimony from survivors of the Holocaust — an opportunity many have written to tell us has been among the most impactful experiences of their school years.

At our gala event last year, titled "Looking Back … Moving Forward," we shared the story of the diversity and breadth of the educational and remembrance work done by the VHEC.

The story continues. Built on the substantial achievements of the Centre's past, an ambitious VHEC Renewal Project, with support from the Canada 150 Community Infrastructure Program, is positioning the Centre for the future.



Architectural scale model of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre space, as envisioned before opening in 1994.

What are the objectives of the Renewal Project?

The VHEC Renewal Project will:

- Improve the visitor experience through enhancements to the physical space of the Centre
- Increase access to our collections through interactive technologies
- Increase the Centre's impacts beyond our physical space by improving online access to our collections
- Preserve an invaluable collection of primary sources, and utilize them in support of the Centre's mandate of educating about and remembering the Holocaust
- Include programs and resources presenting new ways of transmitting eyewitness accounts anchored in learning objectives

Why is the Renewal Project necessary?

The VHEC is seeing increased demand from the audiences we serve. Changes to the B.C. curriculum

emphasize the promotion of social responsibility, as well as historical and critical thinking skills. The VHEC's school programs and teaching resources, many of which offer opportunities to engage with Holocaust-era primary sources from our collections, dovetail with the needs of educators and students. Planning for the future, the Centre is developing new ways of transmitting first-person accounts of the Holocaust anchored in learning objectives.

Students in grades six through 12, and teachers, are the VHEC's core target audiences. Both through infrastructural improvements to the Centre and through enhanced use of technologies, the VHEC will significantly strengthen delivery of programs to these important groups. By improving access to the VHEC's collections, the VHEC Renewal Project will position the Centre as a leading innovative teaching museum for years to come.

Enhancements to the physical space of the Centre will make the visitor experience more fulfilling, whether for school and community group visits or for individual visitors and researchers.

Does the Renewal Project meet an urgent need?

In addition to increasing demand from our core constituents, the VHEC is also preparing for a post-eyewitness era. Survivor testimonies have been central to engaging young people in the history and lessons of the Holocaust. The number of survivors who are able to share their stories is declining, but we are fortunate to have one of the earliest collections of audio-video Holocaust survivor testimonies, initiated in the late 1970s by Dr. Robert Krell, founding president of the VHEC and a professor of psychiatry at the University of British Columbia.

Through funding by the Government of Canada, we are digitizing survivor testimonies, which is critical to the VHEC's ability to expand our educational work and share these eyewitness accounts with future generations.

HOW WILL THE RENEWAL PROJECT AFFECT VHEC PROGRAMS?

The VHEC Renewal Project will cause some interruption of activities at the Centre beginning in July 2017.

The current exhibition, *Canada Responds to the Holocaust, 1944-45*, has been extended until June 30 and the exhibition space will close for renovations from July 1 to December 31, 2017.

While there will be no exhibition and no class visits to the Centre during this period, most aspects of the Centre's important work will continue uninterrupted.

- Symposia and other off-site student outreach programs are scheduled as usual
- Teaching resources will continue to be available
- Commemorative programs, including International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom HaShoah, the High Holidays Cemetery Service and the Kristallnacht Commemorative Lecture will proceed
- Administrative operations will continue within the Centre
- Tribute Cards will continue to be sent to mark special occasions and condolences

The VHEC website (www.vhec.org) will feature ongoing updates on the Renewal Project as well as any news affecting programs or meetings.

VHEC COLLECTIONS

The VHEC is home to Western Canada's largest Holocaust-related collections: a uniquely curated **library**, including the Centre' Rare Books and Special Collections; the **museum** collection, which contains three-dimensional objects and artworks; the **archives**, which includes documents, photographs, ephemera and other items that document the Holocaust, pre-war Jewish life and immigration to Canada; and a **testimony** collection, which contains more than 200 interviews with local survivors, internees, rescuers, and liberators. A bequest from the Estate of Paul and Edwina Heller has allowed the Centre to digitize and catalogue our collections, which is a significant and ongoing project that will allow audiences to access our materials with unprecedented ease.

In addition to advancing the preservation and access to testimonies, the VHEC has developed a pedagogy component to the project. "Primary Voices: Teaching Through Holocaust Survivor Testimony" is a web-based teaching resource currently in development that recognizes that Holocaust survivors' accounts of persecution, loss, and survival — their primary voices — are distinct learning opportunities that support students' engagement with primary and secondary sources.

The Renewal Project will ensure that students, educators, researchers and the general public have improved access to the VHEC's testimonies and collections broadly, and support their integration into future exhibitions and educational programs.

How will the project affect the VHEC's collections?

New strategies to support the preservation, access to and exhibition of primary source materials will enhance the renewed facility, and better serve the Centre's audiences. Improved infrastructure resulting from the Renewal Project – including the integration of visible storage and technology into our space — will allow the VHEC to better support the educational use of our collections. In addition, improvements will support the highest standards of care and future expansion of our invaluable holdings.

What does the Renewal Project mean for the future of the VHEC?

The VHEC Renewal Project represents a significant advancement in our ability to deliver our programs and expand access to our collections. When completed, in early 2018, the VHEC will be superbly positioned to build on our reputation as a leading Holocaust teaching museum.

While built and sustained for and by British Columbians, the Centre is known by those in Holocaust scholarship, research, education and remembrance around the world as a source of leading-edge initiatives.

This Renewal Project will ensure that the VHEC can continue to engage audiences here — especially B.C. high school students and teachers — while strengthening knowledge of the Holocaust and its lessons for social justice and human rights far beyond our community.

Nina Krieger is executive director and Philip Levinson is president of the VHEC.

German Synagogues Rebuilt – Virtually

Marc Grellert initiated 3D reconstruction of Nazi-destroyed shuls

BY PAT JOHNSON

During the Nazi regime, more than 1,400 synagogues were destroyed – 267 during Kristallnacht alone.

In most cases, these structures have been lost to history, remembered only by the survivors of the Holocaust for whom religious life before the war centred around these now-disappeared synagogues.

A project to reconstruct the synagogues — virtually, in 3D — has been underway since 2000, led by Professor Marc Grellert, who came up with the idea when he was a student.

Exterior reconstruction of a synagogue in Dortmund, Germany. Courtesy Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany.

Synagogues in Germany: A Virtual Reconstruction represents an intersection of Grellert's passions: architecture, new media, German history and social activism. When he was a student, Grellert, who is now a professor at Darmstadt Technical University, was involved in projects around educating about and remembering the Holocaust. When a synagogue in the German city of Lubeck was set aflame by neo-Nazis in 1994, Grellert thought there was a need to draw attention to the potential for history to repeat itself. He approached a professor, Manfred Koob, and suggested virtually recreating destroyed Jewish houses of prayer using computer-aided design.

Grellert and Koob first approached the Jewish community of Frankfurt, which is near Darmstadt, to ensure that such a project would not offend any religious sensibilities. When they were assured that the project would be welcomed by the Jewish community, they began by virtually reconstructing three Frankfurt synagogues.

"They were a great success," Grellert said in a telephone interview from Germany. "And we decided to expand this project to synagogues all over Germany and make a

Professor Manfred Koob in front of a virtual synagogue projection. Courtesy Katrin Binner, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Germany.

bigger project, which led to an exhibition in Bonn and made it possible to make a travelling exhibition and this travelling exhibition went to Israel, to the United States and to Canada."

In Canada, the exhibit has been displayed in Winnipeg and Toronto. The high-tech project involves the projection of the 3D images onto multiple screens.

The team of students and professors who have worked on *Synagogues in Germany* over the past two decades — more than 60 individuals in all — used photographs and archival blueprints to reconstruct the buildings, then were able to find eyewitnesses to help complete details like colours.

Wherever the exhibition has travelled, Grellert has travelled with it, and the responses from those who have witnessed it have been moving, he said.

"Some of them were part of the community where the synagogue stood," said Grellert. "For example, the president of the Nuremberg [Jewish] community left Germany at the right time and came back to Nuremberg [after the war] and he thought he would never think to see the synagogue back, even if it was on the computer."

Others asked Grellert to share the electronic files with them because they wanted to show their grandchildren the synagogues of their own childhoods.

The fall of the Nazi regime did not end the destruction of German synagogues, Grellert noted.

"More than 350 synagogues were destroyed after 1945," he said. With no Jewish community to care for or defend a synagogue, some buildings may have fallen into disrepair and been demolished as a matter of urban renewal in the decades after the war. In other cases, Grellert speculates, some people may have felt that by destroying the evidence of history, they could erase the guilt associated with it.

About 25 synagogues have been virtually reconstructed, but the project is in limbo now because storing the large amount of electronic equipment associated with it is becoming unwieldy.

For Grellert, it has been an opportunity to learn about Jewish history and its intersections with German history, and an important way of commemorating the past.

"It's a part of remembering the Holocaust and bringing back, in virtual form, the beauty of the lost synagogues," he said.

Pat Johnson is communications and development consultant to the VHEC.

Writing Lives: Students and Survivors Work Together on Holocaust Memoirs

BY PAT JOHNSON

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre partnered with Langara College and the Azrieli Foundation on an innovative project that brought Holocaust survivors together with college students who interviewed them and wrote their memoirs.

Writing Lives was a two-semester course created as a pilot project. Shortly after the graduation ceremony for the first cohort of students and survivors, in April, the program received approval for a second year.

In the first semester of the course, students learned about the history of European Jewish culture and the Holocaust. In the second term, groups of three students were teamed with a survivor of the Shoah. Students interviewed the survivors, transcribed their recollections and wrote their memoirs, which were presented to the survivors at the graduation event.

"These memoirs will be given to the survivors as gifts for themselves and their families, but they will also be archived and they may possibly be published and they will also serve as legacies for the survivors, their families and perhaps the research community in general," said Dr. Rachel Mines, an English instructor at Langara and coordinator of the Writing Lives program. "I'm also the daughter of survivors, so I know how important it is that the stories get told and kept as a legacy for the families and the children and the grandchildren and great-grandchildren and also for the community at large, which I think is something that this particular program has succeeded in very well."

Dr. Rachel Mines, English Instructor and Coordinator of the Writing Lives Program, Langara College, at the Writing Lives Closing Ceremony. Courtesy Jennifer Oehler, ©Langara College.

Holocaust survivor Dr. Peter Suedfeld at the Writing Lives Closing Ceremony. Courtesy Jennifer Oehler, ©Langara College.

Dr. Peter Suedfeld, professor emeritus of psychology at the University of B.C., spoke on behalf of the survivors who participated.

"I have been interviewed a number of times by different people, of different levels of experience. So when I was asked if I was willing to be interviewed by some students from Langara, I thought, 'Oh well,'" Suedfeld said to laughter. "It's not going to be very interesting.

Writing Lives students Naomi Maissen, Jonathan Pineda and Svetlana Kholcheva. Courtesy Jennifer Oehler, ©Langara College.

They are probably amateurs who don't really know what they're doing."

He was pleasantly surprised, he said.

"My expectations were not fulfilled at all," he said. "They had fresh points of view, they had interesting ideas about the Holocaust, they had interesting questions — not the kind of routine things that I've gone through before with more professional interviewers who tend to ask the same questions the same ways.

Some of the questions made me think about my own experiences in ways that I never had before. ... The interviews were always interesting and lively, occasionally funny, sometimes a bit frustrating and rarely, but once in a while, irritating. But, all in all, a very positive experience and I expect that most of my cohort probably had similar experiences and I certainly hope that the students did as well."

Frieda Krickan, speaking on behalf of the students in the program, saw Writing Lives as an opportunity to honour the survivors, deepen her knowledge of Holocaust history and serve her Jewish community.

"This class has been so much more than that in so many ways," she said. "It's been a life-changing experience and I feel incredibly lucky to be a part of it. This class has taught me the importance of personal perspectives and historical documentation. Memoirs put a more human face on history and they memorialize what our survivors have been through and create empathy that historical facts and figures just cannot. ... These survivors represent living history. These memoirs are a way of honouring survivors and making sure that history will never forget them. ... You cannot get that sort of visceral emotion and

Left: Frieda Krickan speaking on behalf of students at the Writing Lives Closing Ceremony. Right: Gene Homel, Liberal Arts Studies Instructor, B.C. Institute of Technology, who taught a history component of the Writing Lives program. Courtesy Jennifer Oehler, ©Langara College.

intense human connection from a book or documentary. This is a living, breathing human being in front of you opening up about their most intimate and painful memories. It is an experience I will never forget."

She added: "I came out of this class with something I did not expect: Hope. Amidst all their personal accounts of suffering and loss, our survivors still managed to impart upon us the importance of hope. I don't know if I've ever had such a life-affirming experience as talking to these survivors."

Gene Homel, an instructor in liberal studies at the B.C. Institute of Technology who taught part of the Writing Lives course, said evidence-based and factual history are important at a time when the veracity of events past and present are being called into question.

"I think it's all the more important for us to develop and to share among an educated citizenry a factual, evidence-based approach to history," he said.

The collection and preservation of eyewitness accounts is what makes the Writing Lives project so valuable, said Dr. Ilona Shulman Spaar, education director at the VHEC, adding that survivors and students had expressed to her the personal impacts of the experience.

"Some students told me that they would never forget the personal encounters that they had with their interviewees and that they will always carry them close to their hearts. Some even mentioned that this program was life-changing for them," she said. "Some of the survivors shared with me that they greatly appreciated being part of this program. For them, too, it was a unique experience, as most of them never gave interviews to this extent or in such depth."

Robbie Waisman, one of the survivor participants, said the greatest fear that Holocaust survivors have is what's going to happen after they are gone.

"What you are doing gives us hope that it's going to be remembered, to make this a better world," he said. "So thank you."

Serge Vanry, another survivor participant, said it was an experience that he hadn't expected.

"I started out wanting to do this, but feeling uneasy about somehow getting involved in the past, a past that has

Left: Robbie Waisman receives his memoir from students Zoe Mandell and Frieda Krickan. Right: Serge Vanry is embraced by Marni Weinstein. Courtesy Jennifer Oehler, ©Langara College.

Top: Moji Arvin presents flowers to survivor Jannushka Jakoubovitch, while Robin Macqueen and Patricia Sackville look on. Left: Students Paulina Bustamante and Katelyn Ralph present Alex Buckman with his memoir. Courtesy Jennifer Oehler, ©Langara College.

been put away quite a bit," he told the audience. "I was talking about events that I had forgotten, things that were difficult, things that were hard to live with and things that can haunt you. As I was looking back at the past, I started to discover a lot of things that I had forgotten — events, situations that really had disappeared for me." Turning to the students, he said: "You did extremely well and I am really thankful and I've really appreciated what you've done for me, for the things that I don't want to forget, the things that need to be told again for me and for my family." Other survivors who participated in Writing Lives were Alex Buckman, Amalia Boe-Fishman, Jannushka Jakoubovitch, and Mark Elster.

Mines thanked the Azrieli Foundation, for expertise and materials that made Writing Lives possible, and the VHEC "which has been crucial, essential, absolutely indispensable in supporting Writing Lives … through liaising with survivors, making their library available for research and as an interview room and generally just being generous in terms of their time, their advice, expertise and not to mention moral support."

A version of this article appeared in the Jewish Independent.

Pat Johnson is communications and development consultant to the VHEC.

My Częstochowa

BY ELENA FEDER

For my children, Ari and Sharon. And theirs.

I travelled to Częstochowa last September. It was the first time I set foot in the country where my parents were born; the land they fled with no desire ever to return; the world that took from them loved ones, their youth, dreams and aspirations, and irremediably destroyed their lives. So strong was their rupture with the past that they chose not to teach their children Polish, the language in which, in their eyes, unspeakable atrocities were carried out. For them, the Polish neighbours with whom they shared a life had all but aided and abetted the murderous actions of their German masters. At home in Bolivia, I spoke Aymara and Quechua with my nannies, Spanish later at school, with my parents always Yiddish, the *mameloshen*.

Thus, it is no surprise that Poland was never high on my list of places I must visit. Had someone asked why I was going, I might have reasoned that Częstochowa was where my mother and her four brothers were born, that I knew nothing about their lives, and even less about the grandparents, great-grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins I may have had. My mother was not the garrulous type.

In truth, I hadn't formulated any questions, let alone found answers to guide me out of the maze I unknowingly had set out to unravel.

I went as one of 130 participants in the fifth reunion of the World Society of Częstochowa Jews And Their Descendants. The first took place in 2004, but I only learned of the society's existence a few months before. The hook was a link on their website to *The Return of the Violin*, a stunning documentary that tells the story of how a 1713 Stradivarius, stolen from the internationally renowned violinist Bronisław Huberman at Carnegie Hall in 1936, returned 65 years later to his native Częstochowa in the hands of its new owner, the legendary Joshua Bell.[1]

Bronisław Huberman, Courtesy George Grantham Bain Collection, Library of Congress.

I was mesmerized by the story. I had heard that my grandparents owned a paint/hardware store not far from the destroyed New Synagogue where the concert hall now stands. Dots kept connecting. I decided to go.

The moment I set foot on the minibus connecting Warsaw to Częstochowa, I was transported onto the set of an unfinished movie running unheeded in the deepest recesses of my brain since forever.

The language was incomprehensible and my knowledge of the social, cultural and political histories of the land of my ancestors rather superficial. Yet it all seemed strangely

[1] Huberman, who escaped Europe for British-controlled Palestine, founded the Palestine Symphony Orchestra in 1936 (renamed the Israel Philharmonic in 1948) largely to rescue, in a desperate and undoubtedly heart-wrenching effort, some 1,000 musicians and their families from certain death. In a revival of some sort, Bell chose to play the Brahms Violin Concerto (played for Brahms by Huberman when he was nine) on the recovered Stradivarius with the Częstochowa Philharmonic at the Society's Third Reunion in 2009. The world-class Częstochowa concert hall was officially renamed the Bronisław Huberman Philharmonic Hall on that occasion.

familiar, uncannily like home; even the language. The 10 passengers on the bus (French, American, Australian and Canadian) felt like extended family. So did most of the people I would later encounter.

Unsettled, I looked out the window for clues to my inner landscape. Everything I saw had meaning only in context. The present was impregnated by the past. The endless birch and alder forests at the sides of the road conjured images of emaciated ghosts running for their lives, tattered and terrified, begging for mercy, pitilessly gunned down by uniformed Nazis before the sometimes cowered, but mostly gleeful eyes of their old compatriots. I could hear their muttered cries, the words of the *Shema* fade softly with their dying breath.

I shared my thoughts with the others. To my surprise, they too had had such visions. We share the nightmare. We also share the desire to find ways of coming to terms with it. Each in our own way, we were piecing together the frayed remnants of a common past, hopelessly unaware where the road would take us. We later crossed paths at archives, shared our discoveries, supported one another when things got tough, celebrated successes as our own.

The only Polish speaker in the group, a seasoned Australian on his fifth reunion, asked the driver on my behalf if this modern highway had been built atop the old road between Warsaw, Częstochowa, and neighbouring towns like Radom, Kielçe, and Piliça, my father's hometown. No one knew.

New Synagogue destroyed by the Germans on December 25, 1939. Courtesy of Public Library of Częstochowa.

Encountering the Past

My father left for Warsaw to study dentistry, his life dream, in the mid '30s. Armed with determination and a good dose of *chutzpah*, he handed his parents his newly-minted rabbinical title (*Smicha*) — obtained to soothe their fears that he might become a *goy* — cut his *payes*, and took a younger brother to the big city. By the time the war broke into their lives, the modernized *yeshiva bucher* had become a dental surgeon, read *Mein Kampf* in German, joined *Betar*, and enlisted as a medic in the Polish Army ("where else could I learn to use a weapon?").[2] A photograph of my father in uniform, his infantry cap irreverently misplaced, his gloomy brother and proud fiancée standing behind, leaning on his shoulder, speaks volumes. Neither survived. He was barely 23.

My father never forgave his Polish comrades for handing the Jews over to their captors. "Even the Nazi officer shamed and scolded them!" A breach of military etiquette, I guessed. In my eyes, no one could ever surpass the cold-blooded, measured, industrious barbarity of the Nazis; not even their eager collaborators. Besides, Jews fared no better when their own lives were on the line. "It's not the same." End of conversation.

Back there, where stories and places were coming together, I looked for markers of my father's occasional trips home to see family, footprints of memories somehow transferred to mine. Other than the occasional centuries-old house in a village or an odd crumbling farmhouse far afield, I found none. Bare landscapes mimicked

[2] Research into the history of Jews in the Polish military has barely begun. Most joined, if allowed, in response to Ze'ev Jabotinsky's passionate entreatement to flee or take up arms in speeches delivered in Warsaw to tens of thousands of beleaguered coreligionists on three separate historical occasions: 1936, Tisha B'Av 1937 and 1938.

Memorial at Umschlagplatz commemorating Częstochowa Jews, created in 2009 by sculptor Samuel Willenberg, a native of Częstochowa and last survivor of the Treblinka uprising. Four survivors, present at the reunion, were honoured on this occasion: from left to right, Gavriel Horwitz, Marila Rotfeld, Ada Ofir Frajman, and philanthropist Sigmund Rolat. Courtesy Elena Feder Tuchschneider Hoffmann.

the erasure of the past. The murder of six million Jews, nearly half of them Polish with roots a thousand years deep, had left behind a haunting void.

Częstochowa, an important center of Jewish activity before the war, offered a slightly different story. The town attracted large numbers of Jews from neighbouring provinces from the late 1700s and, despite the typical animosities and the occasional pogroms, the community prospered in this deeply Catholic town. By the 1930s, a disproportionate number of the elegant two- and three-story late-19th-century houses and businesses lining the treed boulevard leading to the world-renowned Jasna Góra Monastery, were owned by the wealthier Jews, who were so central to the economic, industrial and social life of the city that even the icons and prints — sold by the millions to Christian pilgrims who traveled great distances to see the miraculous Black Madonna — were produced by them.

It is said that Jews here had also fared better than anywhere else in Poland during the war.

Not so. When the German Army arrived in September 1939, Jews comprised approximately one-third of a population of 135,000. By the end of the war, of the nearly 45,000 Jewish residents — of which only 28,456 were accounted for by the Germans before relocation to the "Big Ghetto" in the poorer Jewish area of town — fewer than 5,000 survived. Not exactly a stellar record.

One reason given for the purportedly high survival rate was Częstochowa's strategic importance to the Nazi war machine. Four of the six armament factories in a defense conglomerate known as HASAG were built there.[3] As recorded in the original German government workers lists (where I found my mother and one uncle), during the five years the camps were in operation, the number of labourers grew from 4,734 to 10,990.[4] Only 2,490 were Częstochowan, the other 7,500 were "selected" following transfers from nearby villages and camps. In 1942 alone, more than 20,000 people were forcibly transferred from neighbouring towns, raising the Jewish population over 50,000, which turned Częstochowa into the third largest ghetto in conquered Poland after Warsaw and Lodz.

I will never know if my paternal grandparents and their five murdered children were among those transferred in 1942 to Częstochowa from Piliça — a *shtetl* with a

[3] A state-sponsored corporation, the acronym HASAG stands for Hugo Schneider Aktion Gesellschaft. HASAG Pelcery, Warta, the Raków steel mill, and the Częstochowianka plant where built in Częstochowa. The other two were HASAG Granat Werke in Kielce and HASAG Skarzysko-Kamiena. Each was devoted to a different aspect of the military enterprise.

[4] This number was corroborated by the survivors in the last year of the war.

population of 1,711 Jews and a history dating back to the late 1500s. It would have been the closest they would have come to crossing paths with their future in-laws, phantasmagorically prefiguring the tortuous road that led to their survivor children's marriage.

I will never know because the Nazis did not bother to keep records of their names, or the names of the hundreds of thousands gassed, shot and buried in Treblinka.[5] From Częstochowa alone, 48,000 Jews were packed into trains and "processed" in this forgotten hell on earth between September 22 and October 7, 1942: a bare two weeks. Daunting.

I lit a candle and said *Kaddish* when we gathered at the *Umschlagplatz* Memorial, a striking monument unveiled in 2009, a few feet from the ramshackle remnants of the fateful station. Created by late sculptor Samuel Willenberg, a Częstochowan who miraculously survived the July 1943 Treblinka uprising, the memorial's simplicity belies the profundity of its message. Rusted train tracks, removed from the nearby station, are fastened to a severed brick-and-mortar wall, on one side in the shape of a star of David, on the other, in two parallel lines. A weeping willow mourns quietly behind the crack. Protected by two tall pieces of thick glass, a copy of a daily train schedule stands to one side like a silent witness.

As if on cue, a sudden burst of heavy rain interrupted briefly the rabbi's heartfelt rendition of *El Malei Rachamin*.[7] The heavens too were crying. Too little, too late, I thought.

There were other events: a banquet, a guided tour of Jewish landmarks, two magnificent concerts, the unveiling of an abstract rendition of a chamber quintet by Israeli sculptor Anna Huberman-Lazowski,[8] and an evening at the Jan Długosz Academy,[9] where high school students unveiled projects referencing the past and present of their city in



From Left to Right: Glass sculpture with train timetable and train station in the background.[6] Train Station exterior today. Fence surrounding Train Station, built from the old railroad tracks. Courtesy Elena Feder Tuchschneider Hoffmann.

[5] It took never more than three hours to "process" each man, woman, and child into one of the 10 gas chambers working simultaneously 24/7. Between 800,000 and 1,200,000 unnamed Jews (and an undetermined number of Roma), continuously transferred to Treblinka as the "inventory" dwindled, were gassed, shot, and buried in mass graves at the camp — up to 15,000 per day. Himmler ordered the camp closed in 1943, after the grounds were razed by fires set by heroic inmates led largely by Częstochowa natives. In a partially successful effort to hide all evidence of his crimes from the advancing Soviet armies, he personally oversaw the exhumation of 700,000 bodies. Inmates, who did the dirty work, witnessed the large heaps of bodies on pyres burning for months. Imagine.

[6] Timetable of the death train from Częstochowa to the extermination camp in Treblinka. It departed from the Warta freight station on September 22, 25 and 28, and October 1, 4 and 7, 1942, at 12:29 p.m. to reach Treblinka at 5:25 the next morning. At 10 a.m., when the train was scheduled to leave for Częstochowa, out of the 7,000 people in the transport only a few men chosen by the Germans to work in the camp were still alive.

[7] "God, full of compassion." A prayer for the dead, especially martyrs, with roots tracing back to the 1648 Chmielnicki pogroms.

[8] A relative of Bronislaw Huberman. The Częstochowa Philharmonic was dedicated to him at the 2012 Reunion.

[9] A prestigious teacher-training institution named after a 15th-century Polish priest and true Renaissance man.

HASAG Pelcery slave labour camp. Signs for businesses on both sides of Camp Memorial at HASAG Pelcery. Courtesy Elena Feder Tuchschneider Hoffmann.

relation to the war — moving attempts to come to terms with a history their young minds can scarcely comprehend.

Eyewitness Memories

Most memorable was our visit to the HASAG Pelcery slave labour camp, a massive brick and mortar compound bordering the city, dedicated largely to the production of bullets and military uniforms during the war. Across the road leading to the camp stood two or three four-story buildings where doctors and engineers lived in cramped quarters alongside seamstresses, tailors, shoemakers and other professionals selected to serve the whims and needs of their Nazi masters.

Thousands laboured and perished behind its walls. It was disturbing to see new industries in operation, their signs affixed to window bars that open to empty rooms, decaying walls, dusty dirt floors, their loaded trucks cutting into this hallowed ground incessantly.

One of the survivors, the indomitable Sigmund Rolat, founder and supporter of the society, bore witness to the horrors. Shaken yet contained, he spoke of life as child in that vile site, punctuating the personal with vivid descriptions of the camp's day-to-day operations. Here, he pointed, cane in hand, the metal was pressed; there, bullets were molded, over there washed … crated … loaded … shipped. In that courtyard, people were regularly shot, punitively or at whim … we watched from the kitchen. Each prisoner, he sighed, worked two daily shifts of 10 hours on starvation rations.

The accumulation of details fleshed out the horror and gave the unimaginable the weight of the real.

Rolat's story is exceptional. Born Zygmunt Rozenblat to a wealthy Częstochowa family, he lost both parents, a brother, and his devoted Polish nanny in the war. He was 15. He made his way to the New World by dint of wit, eventually becoming a successful entrepreneur with businesses in the U.S. and Poland after the fall of Communism. An art collector, music aficionado and philanthropist with a mission to preserve Poland's rich Jewish history, Rolat is a founding member of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, in Warsaw, the main contributor to the annual Jewish Culture Festival in Kraków, ongoing supporter of the Częstochowa Huberman Philharmonic and, along with Alan Silberstein and Alon Goldman, the driving force behind the creation of the Częstochowa Museum of Jewish History, inaugurated with great pomp and circumstance during our visit.[10]

[10] A treasure trove for visitors and researchers alike, the museum occupies the main floor of a beautifully restored, neo-Gothic palatial mansion built circa 1910 on the somewhat seedy but central Kateldrana street. Owned by two or three Jewish families before the war, among them Alon Goldman's maternal grandfather Jacob Czarnylas, the former home now serves several social functions. The Museum, which covers the entire main floor, was created to permanently house the exhibition *Jewish Life in Częstochowa*, on tour since 2004. Curated by Professor Jerzy Mizgalsky and designed by Professor Andrzej Desperak, it spans three centuries of Jewish contributions to all aspects of life in the city, with particular emphasis on the years following the Nazi occupation and the 20th-century events leading up to the war.

Sigmund Rolat recollecting his experience of HASAG Pelcery.

The mayor of Częstochowa placed countless resources at our group's disposal and spoke at practically every event, with particular eloquence at the highly publicized visit to the Jewish cemetery.

Established between 1799 and 1804, the cemetery is a testament to the long-term commitment of the community to its city. Though its 8.5 hectares now cradle fewer than 2,000 surviving gravestones, jostled by crawling roots, bedecked by moss, hopelessly cramped by tangled brushes and sky-defying trees, several monuments have been erected to honour war victims.

Germans and collaborators wreaked havoc at the cemetery from their arrival in 1939 until 1943, a year marked by mass executions. On March 19th, 1943, six resistance fighters were executed against a wall;[11] the next day, German soldiers shot 127 no-longer-needed professionals and their families: doctors, lawyers, engineers and members of the Jewish Council; the 26th of June, they destroyed the remaining "Small Ghetto," murdering some 1,500 people; on the 20th of July, hundreds of slave labourers were executed. Children were killed *en masse* at different times. When the war ended, hundreds of mass graves were exhumed by survivors and given proper burial.

Frustrated by the rain and the fruitless search for family gravestones, my cousin and I left for the City Archives (*Archiwum Panstwowe*). It was not our day. We leafed through countless birth and marriage records but found nothing. In truth, we had no idea what we were looking for or where to begin. Our empathetic friends smiled in recognition.

The next day, armed with new resolve, we went on a mission to find Kozia, the street on our parents' birth certificates (obtained by my brothers a year earlier). Number 24 was nowhere to be found. The houses along the mere block and a half are either old or decaying, or reduced to a crumbling wall devoured by overgrowth. The house of prayer on the corner had been converted to apartments. A supermarket touted gentrification.

I remembered my mother talking about the Black Madonna. The monastery is still as luscious and

Mass grave memorial. Plaque reads: "In this very place, on July 21, 1943, Germans and Ukrainians shot over 200 Jews of Częstochowa. With the passing of time, only these individuals are still remembered (names follow)."

[11] Częstochowa was reportedly one of three cities in Poland where Jewish Fighting Organizations were set up during the war.

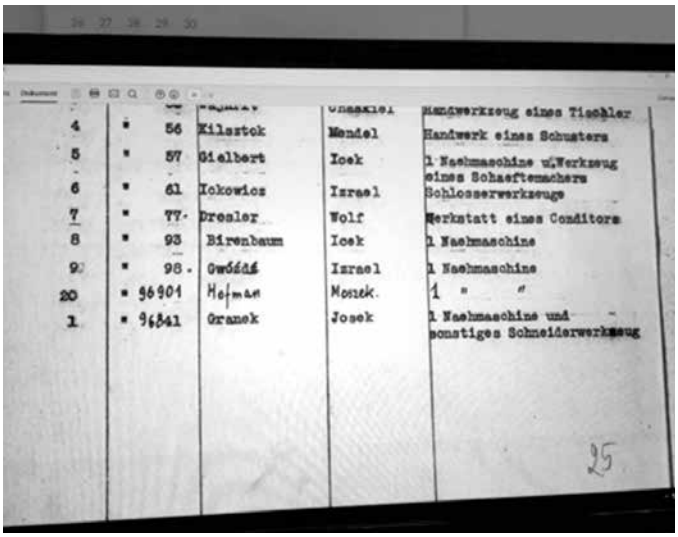
crowded, but the house where she and her family lived had disappeared with barely a trace. We were pilgrims without a shrine.

I felt the stone pavers under my feet, imagined mom as a child playing with friends, brothers, cousins, walking to and from school, accompanying her mother to the market, the *shochet* on holidays. I scoured the area for houses she may have considered while running for shelter after her family was rounded up. Perhaps she returned, betrayed by the farmer who hid the blonde, blue-eyed 17-year-old beauty in exchange for free labour and two gold coins her father had hidden in her shoes. I thought of her languishing in HASAG, emaciated, worked to exhaustion. Sadness gave way to anger. It was time to leave.

I spent the last day with friends at the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. Sifting through microfiche records kept by the Częstochowa *Judenrat* between May 1941 and January 18, 1942, I found my grandfather's name on a list of workers and craftsmen whose tools had been confiscated for the Nazis.[12] His was a sewing machine (*Naehmaschine*). He did not own a painting store after all!

It bothered me that his was the only handwritten name on the typewritten pages. I set the thought aside.

I imagined his sinewed hands working away at the old sewing machine, foot on pedal, his back bent over, the up-and-down motion of the needle giving life to shapeless cloth. Perhaps he was making a dress for his only daughter. Before I could fully imagine my mom proudly parading her father's gift, joy faded into darkness at the realization that Kozia Street runs around the corner of the Old Market Square in the Big Ghetto, the gathering place on the way to the train station a mere six blocks further, where her world would soon roll unabated through the gates of hell.



Moszek Hofman's handwritten Judenrat Entry.

A meeting across time

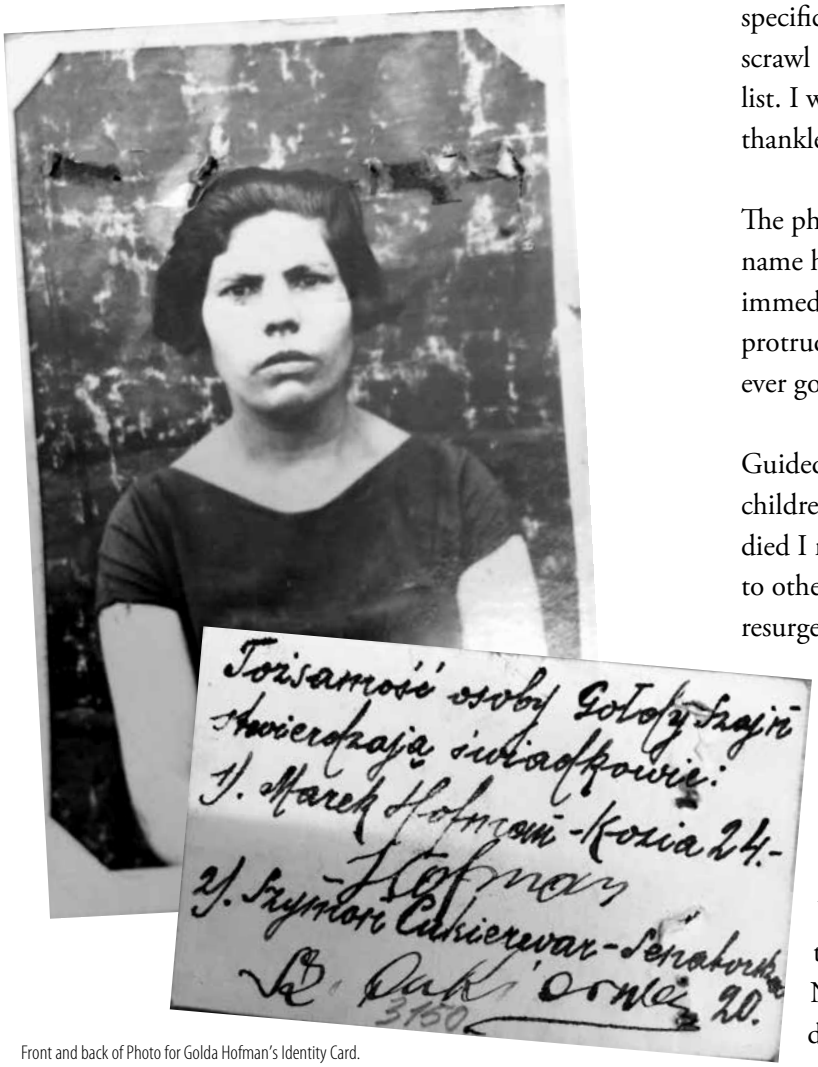
The archivist suggested I look through Częstochowa's municipal records. Imagine my surprise when I found there an application for an identity card issued to my grandmother on May 31, 1930. I pointed to the reference to an extant photograph on the microfiche. The archivist examined the screen in disbelief and ran to fetch the original. He returned with a small dark sepia photograph attached to the original yellowing document. The room was abuzz with excitement. I was dumbfounded.

No pictures of this side of the family survived the war. Had I struck gold?

The document revealed my grandparents' official first and last names (not the Yiddish ones I was given), the time and place of my grandmother's birth (not Częstochowa), her avowed profession (worker), the colour of her hair and eyes (grey like mine).

I searched the photograph for more clues. The young woman staring at the camera was clearly not used to

[12] Judenrat, a Board of Elders approved by the Nazis, was assigned the job of documenting public events: police reports, robberies, upheavals, fires, lack of public services, etc.



Front and back of Photo for Golda Hofman's Identity Card.

having her photograph taken. Her gaze is stern yet quizzical, her body stiff but relaxed. I had imagined her a *babushka*. The solid, curious, assertive woman in the short-sleeved and relatively low-cut dress was everything but. I saw hints of my mother in her, my cousin saw her father.

The back of the photograph opened yet another door. My grandfather's signature, certifying the identity of his 27-year-old wife, jumped out at me like a bolt from outer space, a palpable remnant of his physical presence at a specific place in time. I was relieved that the rudimentary scrawl did not match the handwritten entry in the *Judenrat* list. I wouldn't want to think of him performing that thankless role.

The photograph had had a big impact, but the handwritten name had surpassed the mechanically reproduced image's immediacy by far. I could smell the paper, touch the protruding ink and, through both, him. It is the closest I ever got to any of my four murdered grandparents.

Guided by the belief that I owe "never again" to my children and their children's children, when my father died I made the decision to leave the study of the *Shoah* to others and direct my efforts, instead, to help curb the resurgence of Jew-hatred. I wrote letters and articles, joined organizations, sat on boards, sought out innovative solutions. After 18 years, all I saw was the multi-headed hydra rising again, safe places dwindling. My trip to Częstochowa was an attempt to understand why.

While that question still begs an answer, I learned that I was wrong to think I could skip the past. Not because it has the nasty habit of returning in different guises. One can live with ghosts forever without knowing it, but healing can only come from fleshing them out, endowing them anew with life through the work of remembering, piecing together fragments of their truncated existence, touching walls, walking on cobblestones, cleaning moss off gravestones, reaching out beyond dense-dark anxieties and fears to find moments of rest, maybe even deliverance.

We can only mourn a loss we make our own.

Elena Feder (née Tuchschneider Hoffmann) is an independent scholar, theorist, critic and curator of Film and Media Arts. Her work is increasingly focused on a number of initiatives aimed at curbing the resurgence of antisemitism worldwide.

A Personal History Across the 20th Century

BY LILLIAN BORAKS-NEMETZ

Crossroads: A True Story of Gina Dimant in War and Love is a compendium of memories that Gina Dimant has carried in her heart and mind for most of her life. "The Holocaust is inside me," she says.

When Germany invaded Poland and Jewish people were threatened with annihilation, Gina and her family were exiled to a remote part of the Soviet Union, where life was full of unimaginable hardships. After the war, the survivors were faced with the prospect of yet another treacherous regime, that of Communism. Gina married Alexander Dimant (Sasha) who had lost his entire family in the Holocaust. Fortunately, in the 1970's, the Dimants were able to leave Poland and move to Canada, arriving in Vancouver.

Gina Dimant (Hinda Wejgsman) as a girl. Warsaw, 1938. Courtesy Gina Dimant, *Crossroads: A True Story of Gina Dimant in War and Love.*

Bronze bas relief sculpture by Polish sculptor Marek Rona installed at the Faculty of Education at the University of British Columbia in 2012 to commemorate Janusz Korczak in collaboration with the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada.

The Dimants became active in the Jewish community and are well known for at least several big projects. The first was organizing an evening as a memorial to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This was a hugely successful event honoured by the presence of Władysław Bartoszewski, the head of the Zhegota movement in Poland during the war, an organization that found hiding places for persecuted Jews. We were also honoured by the presence of Marian Turski, very active at the time in the Jewish Historical Society and who is today the chair of the board of the new POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Both flew in from Poland especially for the event.

The second undertaking began when Alexander Dimant, with the help of Gina, started discussing plans for organizing a Janusz Korczak Association. Unfortunately, Mr. Dimant passed away before the plan was completed and afterwards, in his name, in 1999, Gina set to work on making the Janusz Korczak Association a reality, naming Paul Heller (now deceased), the first honorary member of the board.

The Association exists today under the leadership of Jerry Nussbaum. Much has been accomplished in bringing the work and ideology of Korczak to the Canadian public. All work done in Korczak's name is meant to have direct effect on bettering the lives and rights of children.

The conception of *Crossroads* began when Gina would tell her friend and writer Dr. Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo, in bits and pieces, about all she had lived through during the war. Olga made notes and one day she said to Gina, let's write your memoir. That is how *Crossroads*, now also in Polish, as well as Russian and English, came to be — a memoir of one extraordinary woman, Gina Dimant.

BOOK REVIEW BY MOHAMED ABUALY ALIBHAI

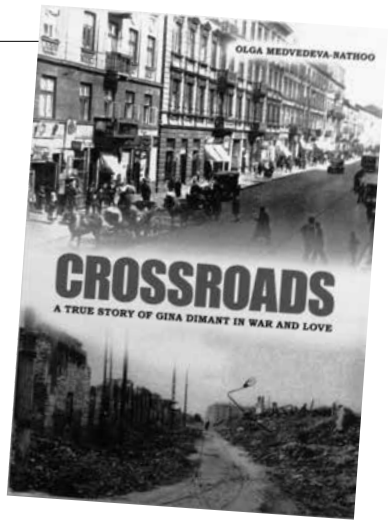
The 20th century, with its two world wars, was arguably the most destructive century in human history. The Second World War, in particular, was devastating for the Jewish people. Although my family is non-Jewish and was far away from the theatre of this war, I have always been

interested in Jewish life in Europe before and after the war as a professional (I am a historian) and a passionate reader. I have studied quite a few books on this subject. Mostly these were memoirs of those who survived the Holocaust, or they were diaries (miraculously saved) of those who perished, or they were articles by renowned researchers of the subject. Each of them helped me to discover one or the other side of the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Recently, quite by chance, I came across a book written by Vancouver author Dr. Olga Medvedeva-Nathoo, a specialist in Polish-Jewish history, that featured the biography of a Vancouver resident, Gina Dimant. The book is titled *Crossroads: A True Story of Gina Dimant in War and Love* (K&O Harbour, 2014). It deals with a relatively uncharted landscape within the broad discipline of Polish-Jewish studies: the life of Jewish refugees from Poland in the Soviet Union.

The book attracted my attention because of its unique genre: a combination of two different points of view — the personal, sometimes even private, perspectives of the protagonist and that of the research-based author; and the two facets of the history it presents, one with a human face and the other that of the more objective information from documents preserved in state archives. The result is a very moving story of Gina from her early childhood (she was born in 1926) up to the present, set in the wider historical context of German-Russian-Polish-Jewish relations in the period of war.

The book traces Gina's life on a personal and a contextual level. On the one hand, it presents Gina's vivid personal recollections from pre-war Warsaw through her escape to the USSR where she and her family were given sanctuary by the Soviets after the Nazis invaded Poland in September 1939 (they were soon deported to eastern Kazakhstan). They returned to Poland after the war ended, but the Polish political crisis of 1968 and the government's anti-Jewish campaign with a new round of discrimination led her to immigrate in 1970 to Canada, where she and her husband, Alexander Dimant, settled and became prominent members of the Jewish community. In Vancouver, they helped create several significant Polish-Jewish cultural programs, such as the celebration of the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and the establishment of the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada. And on the other hand, the book provides detailed contextual background of Jewish life in Poland, the survival of Jewish refugees and deportees in the Soviet Union, their starvation, cold, ideological pressure, fear and so on.



Crossroads is a memorable story of indomitable courage in the face of unspeakable evil, murder and cruelty — a triumph of the human spirit.

An engaging style and accessible language make this book ideal for various categories of readers: high school and university students; individuals who like to discover lesser-known pages of history; and survivors and their descendants who made Canada their home after the war. It will also be of interest to scholars engaged in the study of Jewish women and girls during the Holocaust years.

An additional asset of the book is its many poignant photos that, taken together, form their own narrative from Gina's childhood to her present residence in Vancouver.

In undertaking this labor of love, Dr. Medvedeva-Nathoo has rendered immeasurable service to the Jewish community in Vancouver and, in wider perspective, to Polish-Jewish studies in general.

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" section of *Zachor*.

Mohamed Abualy Alibhai received his PhD from Harvard University.

A Solemn Promise

BY JAN FISHMAN

The following remarks were presented at the VHEC's Yom HaShoah Commemorative Evening, April 23, 2017.

Tonight it is my great privilege to speak to you as a representative of the Second Generation, the generation of people first descended from the survivors of the Shoah.

"Jan" is not a common name for a Jewish-Canadian man, and often when I meet people for the first time they ask me about my name's origin. I tell them that I was named for Jan Spiekhout, the Dutch Resistance fighter who saved my mother from the Nazis by hiding her in his own home.

My mother, Amalia van Kreveld, was born on August 23, 1939, in Leeuwarden, Friesland, a city in the north of the Netherlands. On May 10, 1940, the Germans invaded the Netherlands; my mother was not quite nine months old.

Beginning on April 29, 1942, when my mother was just two-and-a-half years old, Dutch Jews were required to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothing. Deportations of Jews from the Netherlands began in the summer of 1942. By that time, escape from the Netherlands was nearly impossible, and hiding outdoors equally so. Unlike some other parts of Europe, the Netherlands is flat, sparsely wooded, and densely populated. There was simply no place to hide, unless one was hidden.

My grandparents, just young parents themselves, made the difficult decision to give away their children to be hidden by others, with the hope that they might survive.

My grandparents' elder child, David, whom everyone called "Dik," was born April 28, 1937. A few months after his fifth birthday, he was given to a family of farmers in a rural part of Friesland. His blue eyes and knowledge of the Friesian language allowed him to pass fairly easily as a Gentile. He endured rough treatment and hard work, but he survived.

Jan Fishman speaking at the 2017 Yom HaShoah Commemoration.

My grandparents gave my three-year-old mother to be hidden by a 22-year-old member of the Dutch Resistance named Jan Spiekhout. Jan knew my grandfather, as they were both working for the same dairy company when the war broke out. Jan lived at that time with his father, Durk Spiekhout, a local policeman, his mother Froukje, and his five siblings.

Baby Amalia van Kreveld (now Boe-Fishman) with her brother David and paternal grandparents Arnold and Keetje van Kreveld. The grandparents were murdered in Auschwitz in 1942. Amalia, David and their parents survived by being hidden in different locations arranged by Jan Spiekhout. Courtesy Amalia Boe-Fishman.

This family of eight sheltered my mother in their own home, with the knowledge that her discovery could mean imprisonment or death for their entire family. Indeed, fully one-third of the Dutch population who hid Jews from the Nazis were murdered for their acts of righteousness.

For three years, the Spiekhouts sheltered my mother. At first, they tried to pass her off as a visiting relative. However, the Spiekhouts were blond, blue-eyed "giants" — that's my mother's word. My mother, on the other hand, was small and slight, with brown hair and brown eyes. They abandoned this cover story fairly quickly.

My mother's youth and innocence also posed a special kind of danger. Early in her period of hiding, my mother once announced to unsuspecting visitors in the Spiekhout home that she could not go outside the house, as she was "not wearing a yellow star." The horrified Spiekhouts realized that my mother must not be allowed to interact with anyone outside the tiny trusted circle of the Resistance ever again.

My mother remembers many days of terror after that. Days of hiding in cupboards and cellars, cautioned to be silent and to never, ever whimper or cry. She remembers a time when it became so dangerous for hidden Jews in Leeuwarden that she was sent to stay with relatives of the Spiekhouts in rural Friesland. But, when the immediate danger passed she returned "home" to the Spiekhouts. That is what she remembers also: that their house was her home. She shared the bed of Alie and Annie Spiekhout, both of whom she called "Sister," and was bounced on the knee of the policeman Durk, whom she called "Father."

On one occasion, Durk the policeman took a great risk to perform an act of kindness. My mother remembers the event quite well, as it was so unusual. She was bundled up and taken for a ride on the back of his bicycle, passing the same building several times. After the war, my mother learned the full story. Durk had learned from the Resistance that my grandparents, who had been moved from hiding spot to hiding spot, were being hidden for a while in a nearby basement. Durk rode my mother past their hiding spot so that they could see that their daughter was still alive and well, as they peeked through a window in the basement.

My mother survived, of course, as did her parents and now two brothers; a younger one, also "Jan," being born on November 11, 1944. They were virtually the only surviving members of the family. Most, including my mother's grandparents, had been deported to death camps in the East, where they perished.

By the time the Netherlands was liberated, on May 5, 1945, more than 75% of the Dutch Jewish population, and fully 96% of the Dutch Jewish children, had been murdered. Only the Jewish population of Poland suffered greater per capita losses.

On this Yom HaShoah, on this solemn day of remembrance, I stand before all of you to declare that I will remember.

I will remember that my mother was among that tiny 4% who survived.

I will remember that the 96% who perished at the hands of the Nazis included my mother's cousins, playmates and neighbours.

I will remember that I am able to stand before you today due to the heroism of the man for whom I was named, and that of his family.

Seventeen years ago, when I was engaged to be married, I sent a letter and a wedding invitation to Jan Spiekhout's widow. In my letter, I promised her that I would never change my name, and that whenever I was asked about my name I would tell the story of her late husband and his family. I considered that promise to be a solemn pledge, and I have kept my word.

On this Yom HaShoah, on this solemn day of remembrance, I stand before you as a representative of the Second Generation. To you, Mother, and to all survivors of the Shoah, I make this promise on behalf of my generation:

You will be remembered.

Your suffering will be remembered.

Your triumph over that suffering will be remembered.

This promise is my solemn pledge to you.

Holocaust survivors at the 2017 Yom HaShoah commemoration.

DECEMBER 20 - MAY 20, 2017

GET WELL

Susie Micner, Wishing you a full and speedy recovery. Aron, Sam & Al Szajman; Ida & Odie Kaplan

Judy Thau, Wishing you a speedy and complete recovery. Charlotte & Jeff Bell

Tom Winkler, Thinking of you. Faye & Richard Elias

Karen Cohen, Wishing you a speedy recovery. Debby & Mark Choit

SYMPATHY

Danny Wollner & Family, On the loss of your wife, mother and grandmother, Vera Wollner. Leslie Morris & Family; Tom Winkler & Caren Perel, Oliver, Alexandra & Micah; Vera & Bernard Rozen & Jordan; Gabriel & Shirley Hirsch & Family; Heather Woolstone, Carolynn Woolstone & Family; David, Tamara, Teah, Noah & Andrew Bakonyi; Judy Kalla; Esther, Jacob, & Jedidiah Blumes

Tom Wollner, On the loss of your mother, Vera Wollner. Elizabeth & Steve Adilman & The Girls

Joanie Wolfin, Sincere condolences. Ida Kaplan

Richard Wolak & Family, On the loss of your mother and grandmother, Elizabeth Wolak. Muriel Morris; Victor & Judy Stern; Susan & Joe Stein, Michelle, Jenna & David; Eva Dymant

Joe & Jason Wertman & Family, On the loss of your mother & grandmother, Regina Wertman. Al and Anne Hers; Allan Soltan; Patti and Ralph Aknin; Ida & Odie Kaplan; Rob & Marilyn Krell; Sally, Sid & Alex Coleman

Rochelle Wertman, On the loss of your mother, Regina Wertman. Ida & Odie Kaplan

Wertman Family, On the loss of your mother, Regina Wertman. Esther, Jacob & Jedediah Blumes; Gary, Stephen, & Richard Lowy; Jocy Lowy

Vivian Claman & Family, In memory of your father & grandfather, Michel Mielnicki. Yossi & Andrea Kowaz, Eli & Ruthy; The Kahn Family

Paul Brosgall & Family, In memory of Diane Brosgall. Chaim & Aliza Kornfeld & Family

Bonnie & Alan Belzberg, On the loss of your daughter-in-law, Jessica. Danya Fox & David Fugman; Rome & Hymie Fox

Stacey Szetlabi, On the loss of your Father. Susan & Joe Stein & Family

Joanne & Stanis Smith & Family, In memory of Belle Smith. Irene Guttman, Sasha Budlovsky & Family

Tamara Shenkler, In memory of your father, Maurice Shenkler. Sherri Silverman, Marv Stern, Micah & Max; Sharlene Gill; Eric & Deena Chochinov; Susan & Eric Stine; Donna Lewis, Howard, Claire & Brian Riback

Rhoda Shapiro, On the loss of Ira. Peppa Martin & Family

Shauna Seskin, On the loss of your Father. Les & Karen Cohen & Family

Mr. & Mrs. Jacobo Schweber, In memory of Geulah Zimmerman. Philip & Sherry Levinson & Family

Mr. & Mrs Guillermo Schweber, In memory of Geulah Zimmerman. Philip & Sherry Levinson & Family

Shirley Schwartz, In memory of your husband, Phil. Anita Shafran

Jenny & Jack Rootman & Family, On the loss of your mother and mother-in-law, Reva Puterman. Heather Wolfe; Ida & Odie Kaplan; Robert & Marilyn Krell

Melody Robens-Paradise, In memory of your mother, Anneliese. Heather Wolfe

Peter Suedfeld & Phyliss Johnson, On your loss. Alex Buckman

Henia & Jack Perel & Family, On the loss of your sister and aunt, Renia Perel. Julie Gutovich & Family; Hymie & Rome Fox & Family; Esther, Jacob, & Jedediah Blumes; Longina Dimant; Ida & Odie Kaplan; Robert & Marilyn Krell; Sally, Sid, & Alex Coleman

Libby Ordel, On the loss of your Mother. Esther, Jacob, & Jedediah Blumes

Reita Goldberg, On your loss. Jocy Lowy

Goldie Wolin, In memory of your mother, Manya Schnitzer. Tamar & Gary Lowy

David Parker, On the loss of your Uncle. Al & Sam Szajman

Gabay Nassim, In memory of your Father, Yehuda. Nancy Benyaer

Michael & Ellen Millman & Family, In memory of your mother & grandmother, Ida Millman. Phil & Sherry Levinson; Les & Karen Cohen & Family; Marilyn & Perry Ehrlich; Debbie & Eddie Rozenberg & Family; Gayle Finlayson & Craig Morris; Faye & Richard Elias

Bob Millman, In memory of your mother, Ida Millman. Debbie & Eddie Rozenberg & Family

Dennis & Wendy Malkin, In memory of Golan Malkin. Odie Kaplan

Patricia Laimon & Family, In memory of your husband, father and grandfather, Harold Laimon. Esther, Jacob, & Jedidiah Blumes; Shoshana & Moshe Fidelman

Pamela & Bill Lachman, In memory of your Aunt Bryna. Esther, Jacob, & Jedidiah Blumes

Yolanda (Andi) & Mark Babins & Family, On the loss of your father and grandfather, Ben Folk. Robert & Marilyn Krell; Sanford Cohen; Sally & Sid Coleman; Corinne Zimmerman & Jon Festinger; Debbie & Eddie Rozenberg; Tracey & Tony Mammon, Josh & Angela; The Szajman Family; Sarina & Jorge Hartmann; Les & Karen Cohen & Family; Ida Kaplan; Odie Kaplan; Bonnie & Mel Bauer; Philip & Sherry Levinson; Faye & Richard Elias; Mike & Mary Cohene

Marcia & Steve Babins & Family, On the loss of your father and grandfather, Ben Folk. Sarina & Jorge Hartmann; Les & Karen Cohen & Family

Marcos Kogan & Family, On the loss of your wife, Susanna. Eva Szende, Elena Feder

Mira Kaikov & Family, In memory of your mother, Rachel Skolnik. Nancy Benyaer; Moshe & Shoshana Fidelman

Ray Alonzo, In memory of Benjamin and Milagros Alonzo. Jana Mings

In memory of Alex Mermelstein, husband, father and grandfather. Ilona Mermelstein, Andrea, Avi & Adam

Ellen Greenspoon, In memory of your mother, Mizi Munz. Eva Szende

Jill Diamond, On the loss of your brother, Steven Diamond. Hymie & Rome Fox & Family

Laurie & Barry Glotman, On the loss of your brother, Steven Diamond. Peppa Martin

Norman Green, In memory of your sister, Mitzi Kanee. Debbie & Eddie Rozenberg

Linda Gold & Family, In memory of your mother, Pearl. Anita Shafran & Family

Hanna Frankel, On the loss of your Mother. Sarah Richman

Tara, Peter & Reid Seligman, On the loss of your father & grandfather Bernard. Gerri & Mark London

TRIBUTE CARDS

Myran Osrin & Family, On the loss of Eliot. Kristina & Michael Berman

Lynne Fader, On the loss of your Mother. Susan & Joe Stein

Josh Epstein, In memory of Bryna Brail. Marilyn & Perry Ehrlich

Tony & Ruth David, On the loss of your mother, Marcelle. Robert & Marilyn Krell; Nancy Benyaer

Family of Esther Glotman, In memory of your mother & grandmother. Hymie & Rome Fox

Fred & Eileen Cohen, On the loss of your father, Hymie Cohen. Debbie & Eddie Rozenberg & Family

MAZEL TOV

Robbie Waisman, On your 85th Birthday. Gerri & Mark London

Chaim Kornfeld, On being honoured by the Louis Brier. Phillipa Friedland

Agi Bergida, Happy Birthday. Stanley & Joycelaine Sunshine

David Tessler, On your 85th Birthday. Robbie & Gloria Waisman; Rita Akselrod

Dr. Art Hayes, Happy Birthday. Lola & Norman Pawer

Derek Glazer, Happy 90th Birthday. David Ehrlich

Chris Friedrichs, Congratulations. Robert & Alicia Matas

Jemima Stein, On your special Birthday. Peppa Martin

Ben Gutman, In honour of your Bar Mitzvah. Czesia Fuks Geddes & Ross Geddes

Claude Romney, Best of luck during Yom HaShoah. Alex Buckman

Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, Best of luck during Symposium. Alex Buckman

Judy Breuer, Happy Birthday. Ellen & Barrie Yackness

Jacob Merkur, On the occasion of your Bar Mitzvah. Dana, Matthew, Ethan, Dylan & Brody Ross

Fred Brauer, Happy Birthday. Sally Berry

Susan Mendelson, Happy Birthday. Peppa Martin, Cole, Parris, Arielle, Fraser & Shea

Lorrie McGregor, On your 75th Birthday. Ron & Caroline Schindler

Dolly Macara, Happy 101st Birthday. Debbie & Ed Rozenberg

Ken Levitt, On your special Birthday. Karen, Courtney, Bailee & Brayden Cohen

Estie Kallner, Mazel tov on your Bat Mitzvah. Shana & Alan White

Helen Heacock Rivers, Happy Birthday Mom. Catherine Rivers

THANK YOU

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Symposium Staff, Thank you. Kit Krieger

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Kit Krieger, Thank you. Robbie Waisman

Rob & Marilyn Krell, Thank you. Tamara & David Bakonyi

THANK YOU VHEC VOLUNTEERS!

OUTREACH SPEAKERS

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

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SPECIAL PROJECTS

Alex Buckman, Richard Elias, Bonnie Elster, Chris Friedrichs, Debby Freiman, Dasa Hynek, Marianne Hoffard, Hodie Kahn, Kit Krieger, Ella Levitt, Evelyn Ray, David Schaffer, Meredith Shaw, Stan Taviss, Emily Winckler (UBC Intern)

OUR SINCERE APOLOGIES FOR ANY ERRORS OR OMISSIONS

• SAVE THE DATE •

Please plan to join the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre for a very special evening this Fall.

• WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 2017 •

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