



Zachor | *Remember*

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre Newsletter | Number 2 | April 2005



Join us in observing
Yom HaShoah Holocaust Memorial Day

YOM HASHOAH CEMETERY SERVICE

11:00 AM, SUNDAY, MAY 8TH, 2005

SCHARA TZEDECK CEMETERY
2345 SW Marine Dr.,
New Westminster, BC

SERVICE INCLUDES:
Candlelighting in memory of
the six million who perished and
monument unveiling



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VHEC ACTIVITIES OUTSIDE OF BC

Frieda Miller, Education Coordinator trained 60 first-time docents in Calgary, Alberta on April 7, 2005 for their *Anne Frank in the World* exhibit. A "virtual" PowerPoint tour of key images from the exhibit was developed by Frieda Miller with support from Sarah Ruediger.

Canadian Jewish Congress: Ontario will reprint images and text from of the VHEC produced teaching resource *Too Close To Home: Anti-Semitism & Fascism in Canada*, for an anti-Semitism & racism kit they are developing for use in Ontario schools.

VHEC produced exhibit *Ravensbrück: Forgotten Women of the Holocaust* opened in Spring Valley, New York on February 28 and will be on display there until April, 2005.

Dr. Robert Krell spoke at the Spertus Institute in Chicago on *The Life Journey of Child Survivors* on April 17, 2005, and will give the Yom HaShoah address in Calgary on May 5, 2005.

Robbie Waisman will speak at the Calgary High School Symposium on May 5 – 6, 2005.

Child Survivor Lillian Boraks-Nemetz will be speaking on Sunday, May 8, 2005 at the Jewish Community Centre in Saskatoon as part of their Annual Holocaust Memorial Service.

Child Survivor Alex Buckman will be speaking to students in the Saskatoon school system on May 6, 2005.



Zachor | Remember

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WE ARE HERE to remember

YOM HASHOAH COMMEMORATION
A SPECIAL EVENING OF MUSIC AND DANCE
COMMEMORATING THE HOLOCAUST.

PRESENTED BY THE VHEC

THURSDAY, MAY 5, 7:30PM,
CHAN CENTRE AT UBC

TICKETS \$10, AVAILABLE NOW
VHEC 604.264.0499
TICKETMASTER 604.280.4444

Sixty years after the end of World War II and the liberation of the Auschwitz death camp, *We Are Here To Remember* commemorates the nearly 6 million Jews murdered in the Holocaust, to remind people that the evils of racism must not be tolerated.

By remembering the Holocaust, we warn today's generation (and future generations) that the Nazi crimes were a crime against us all; that if one person's humanity can be denied, anyone's can. We remember to confront our own attitudes and actions in the present by speaking out and urging our governments to take action against the likes of the current atrocities in Darfur and the increasing anti-Semitism in many parts of the world.

After a candlelighting ceremony to commemorate the 6 million Jews killed in the Holocaust, music, dance and readings will highlight the theme, *We Are Here To Remember*.

Warren Kimmel, Actor and singer, will present dramatic texts and songs, including an original work by Vancouver's Joan Beckow. A recent immigrant from South Africa, he is well-known to Vancouver audiences for his roles in "Evita" and "Jacques Brel" and participation in the 2005 Chutzpah! Festival.

Kiev-born **Natasha Boyko**, Vancouver Symphony cellist, will play pieces for cello and piano, accompanied by Wendy Bross Stuart.

Claire Klein Osipov, Canada's foremost Yiddish singer, will present songs from the Holocaust.

Rebecca Margolick will perform dance inspired by Holocaust themes, choreographed by her mother, **Mary-Louise Albert**, Artistic Director of the Norman Rothstein Theatre.

David Ehrlich, a Holocaust survivor, will introduce his son, **Perry Ehrlich**, and granddaughter **Lisa Ehrlich**, who will perform *Remember* with an ensemble of talented young singers from the community. This song was written by Perry.

The Vancouver Jewish Men's Choir, Musical Director, Stan Shear, featuring soloists Cantor Yaacov Orzech and Stewart Cohen, will perform, accompanied by Joyce Cherry and Annette Altman.

For information call the VHEC 604.264.0499. Tickets are \$10 and are available at the VHEC or through Ticketmaster (604.280.4444). Free parking at the Chan Centre with event ticket.

We Are Here To Remember is produced by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre and Artistic Producers Wendy Bross Stuart and Ron Stuart, of wrs Productions.

Presented with the generous support of:



THE GAIL FELDMAN
HELLER ENDOWMENT
FUND OF THE VHEC

Faces of Loss

On display through June, 2005

The current vhec exhibit, *Faces of Loss* focuses solely on the victims of the Holocaust with the goal of humanizing what has become an abstraction of numbers. Many vhec exhibits, such as *Open Hearts-Closed Doors*, have focused on the experiences of survivors. We know the stories of survivors, and in many cases have their artifacts. Other exhibits, such as *Korczak & the Children of the Warsaw Ghetto* and *Ravensbrück: Forgotten Women of the Holocaust* have focused on unique experiences of specific groups or places during the Holocaust. It is much more challenging to create an exhibit that focuses directly on the victims, those who died or were murdered as a direct result of the Nazi assault on European Jews, without resorting to the dehumanizing photographs of piles of bodies at places such as Bergen-Belsen. Many exhibits that appear to focus on the victims actually focus more on the sites or the mechanisms of death. They often feature pictures of the crematorium, mass gravesites, or canisters of zyklon B, images devoid of victims or perpetrators. These exhibits attest to the power and cunning of the perpetrator and can often further dehumanize the victims. Other exhibits on pre-war Jewish life make no distinction between those who fled, those who were victimized and those that perished.

Faces of Loss focuses on the victims by presenting simple portrait images of people who perished. All of the source photographs were brought to the Centre by people living in our community. Though the focus is on victims, the existence of a survivor or a family member, (in some cases the sole survivor), is implied by the name of the relative and their relationship to the person who perished, being listed. The donor of the photo embodies the family's collective loss and is also the carrier of memory. There is no over-arching narrative, no connecting exhibit text and very little historical background provided. What is given is the name of the person who was killed, what country they lived in, how they died if known and who they are related to in our community. Inherent and central to the exhibit is the knowledge of the viewer that all the faces they will encounter are people who perished in the Holocaust. The singular opening caption at the entrance of the exhibit gives viewers this significant critical context. Yet, even with such minimal historical context the exhibit is intended as an educational vehicle – more affective in nature than informational. Visitors are intended to respond emotionally.



The Nazis and their collaborators murdered nearly 6 million Jews during the Holocaust. Each victim pictured is related to someone in our community.

The exhibit was developed with the goal of balancing the needs of our community to remember and honor family members who perished and the need to produce an exhibit with educational potential. This duality presented many difficult choices to us. Many, many families, for very understandable reasons have no photographs of those closest to them that perished, yet lists of names are not nearly as engaging as images which reflect lifestyles, ages, nationality and class. Though many memorials effectively use only names, such as the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C., exhibits demand a stronger visual engagement. The images, which are close to life size, are displayed in “family” groupings. Where they existed, the most recent photograph was used.

One of the goals of mounting this exhibit was to provide a space for survivors who carry an obligation to remember. Institutions can act in partnership with those needing sites of memory, and can facilitate and begin to take on and carry that community responsibility. Another goal was to facilitate or encourage the transference of memory to the next generation. It has been affirming to see many people who brought in photographs come in with their children and grandchildren to see and to witness. Seeing the photographs, with names and fates, helps to place in memory the perished family member and their relationships to those who are living.

The differing experiences of the Holocaust survivor and the Holocaust victim who perished is a complex distinction. In many instances victims were gassed on arrival and were spared the brutality of the camp experience –with no opportunity to rebuild lives or live the realization of their loss. Survivors carry the memory of the full experience and also the knowledge and observation of the death of others. Their experiences up to the moments of death in many cases were identical; deportation, separation, and physical suffering (both groups were brutalized), but in the last moments they differed in fate and fate alone.

L’Dor Va’Dor: From Generation to Generation

BY RHODA L. FRIEDRICHS

I don't remember ever being told about the Holocaust – and at the same time, I don't remember a time in my life when I did not know about it. I was born in New York a year after the war ended (the only war that did not require a specific name, of course). My parents had fled from Nazi Germany in the '30's, and had met and married in New York. As a child growing up in a very mixed immigrant neighbourhood, I took it for granted that everyone's parents had an accent of some kind, and none of my friends' grandparents spoke English.

I had a grandparent, too: my father's father, who had fled from Germany to Shanghai, and then to New York. He lived with us until his death in 1952, and my early childhood was spent in a three-generation family, complete with aunts and uncles and cousins who came and went and celebrated holidays together. Not only my father's father, but his brother and three sisters had escaped from Germany and ended up in New York.

My mother used to say in later years that she was glad to be able to make a home for her father-in-law since she could not make one for her own parents. Her family's fate had been very different from that of my father's family. My mother and her sister had made it to the United States, but both their parents, Carl and Thekla Rosenberg, perished in the Holocaust, along with the rest of what had been a fairly large extended family. My mother had one cousin who had gone to Israel and another to Chile, but the rest of the relatives who had shared what she called her "German life" were gone. Except for her sister, the friends and relatives of her "American life" were all new-found ones.

I sensed in their values, in the kind of lives they had led, major elements of my own life. Their legacy to me, their unknown granddaughter, was an enormously positive one.

Although I grew up knowing only my father's side of the family, my mother's lost family was a vivid presence. My mother had had a warm and happy childhood, and had been very close to her own mother. She loved to tell me stories from her childhood, and I would ask her again and again for the ones I especially liked. I knew all about the apartment house in Posen (later Poznan) where they had lived, right next to my grandfather's lumberyard, and the English music hall songs he learned on a trip to London, and the way he had whirled my grandmother around the crowded furniture of the living room to dance as he sang them: "Komm, Mäuseschwänzchen, tanz!" He was proud of having seen something of the world, as well as being a successful businessman and a veteran of the German army. My grandmother was far quieter, but when their world was



turned upside down by World War I, she was also far more flexible. It was she who managed to persuade or bribe the Polish police to release her husband when he was arrested for being so persistently German in 1921, and she who adapted to the Weimar spirit after that, when they left Poznan for Berlin.

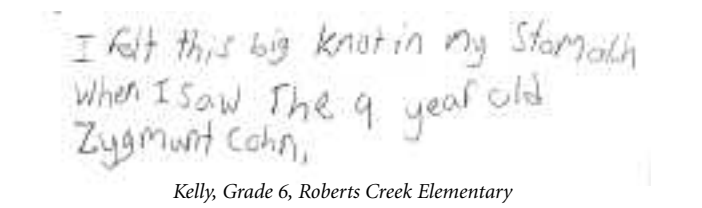
I heard a lot about the family's Berlin years, too, at least until the mid-'30's. I was always aware that it was not a good idea to ask my mother, usually so ready to talk about her father and mother, about those dark later times. I knew they were dead, of course, but when did I learn more than that? When I was a small child, in the early post-war years, I knew that my mother harboured an irrational hope that her mother had survived somewhere, somehow. I would sometimes imagine my grandmother appearing, and my mother's joy. I wondered which room she would have. By the time I was ten or so I knew that my mother and her sister had struggled in their early years in the U. S. to put together the money and the affidavits and the visas for their mother to come to Cuba. Their father was sick and aging by then, and there was no hope of his immigrating. Thekla wouldn't agree to leave him until she saw more and more Berlin Jews being deported, and by then it was 1941 and, as for many others, it was too late. A last message was smuggled out in November 1942 through a Swedish friend: "My children will have to search for me."

The impress on my life of my maternal grandparents was a strangely powerful one. They had been essential in making my mother who she was, and were an on-going part of her life and thoughts. I sensed in their values, in the kind of lives they had led, major elements of my own life. Their legacy to me, their unknown granddaughter, was an enormously positive one. And at the same time, from my earliest years on, my thoughts of them have always been overshadowed by thoughts of destruction, about the growing privations and fear of their final years, and about their ultimate degradation and suffering and murder. A completed story always carries foreshadowings of its conclusion, and the Holocaust laid its hand on my perceptions of the entire lives of these unknown grandparents I knew so well.

Students Put Faces to the Number Six Million

BY FRIEDA MILLER

The current exhibit, *Faces of Loss*, has elicited a strong emotional response from visitors, especially from those whose photos are on display, among them survivors and the second generation. As Inge Manes, who survived the Holocaust as a child hidden in a Belgium convent, observed, *It is very emotional for me to see my father's picture in this exhibit. I think that all the survivors must cry when they see these photos. When I look at my father's picture, I remember how handsome he was and how gentle he was as a father. I was only 6 years old when I saw him for the last time. I keep thinking what a wonderful life I could have had with him.* Even staff members, in the process of conducting intake interviews or installing photographs, have been moved by the poignant images and the tales of the tragically abbreviated lives. As powerful as the exhibit is for many of those in our community, its interest for student visitors and its value for teaching is less obvious. In fact, of the many exhibits showcased by the VHEC in its ten-year history, none has presented as unique a challenge for school programming. When survivors approach the exhibit, they are inevitably drawn to the images of their own family, often inviting others to “come see”, “come visit” their family members. This touching scene of survivors introducing their friends to the images of those who perished, plays out repeatedly. But, what can students or teachers, who do not have the same personal connections to the images, make of the exhibit?



Public visitors to the exhibit are met by a sea of anonymous photographs, each of which are treated with equal emphasis. The exhibit offers students and teachers no obvious guideposts. There is no narrative, no story like that of the rescuer Chiune Sugihara, no chronology and no overarching themes such as; the treatment of the disabled or orphans in the Warsaw ghetto.

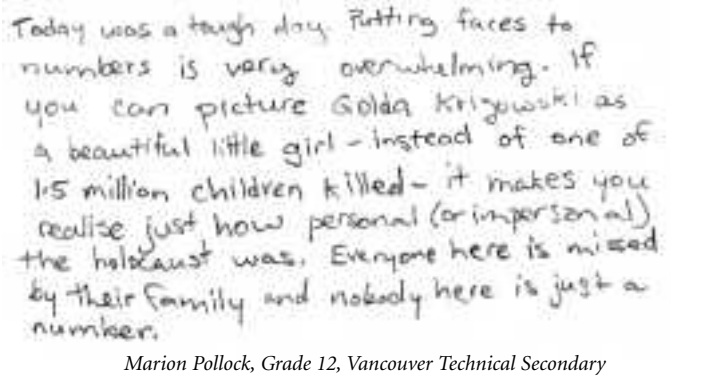


When I am in this room chill suddenly hits me. Thinking of what they went through makes me feel like I take stuff for granted.
Daynah Kingston, Grade 7, Roberts Creek Elementary

The faces of the people portrayed do not have the same recognition factor as that of Anne Frank, nor are they the powerful iconographic images, commonly associated with Holocaust exhibits. The all too familiar, black and white documentary photographs of rail cars or concentration camps are markedly absent.

What can be learned about the Holocaust from these photographs? What stories do they reveal and what meaning do they have for those who brought them in and for student visitors? The challenge for the school program was to find ways for students to investigate the photographs, to uncover what information they reveal about the Holocaust, while at the same time, responding to the photographs’ emotional impact. To meet this challenge, a teaching strategy was developed that has two distinct threads, cognitive learning about the history of the Holocaust and a more personal, affective engagement with the photographs, their histories and their meanings.

During the first part, students are asked to look at the photographs and read the captions to discover what they can about who the victims were and how they perished. By sharing this information with others in the class, students begin to appreciate the range of victims, the differing circumstances of death, the scope and enormity of the Holocaust. Learning about the victim’s nationalities helps students understand how wide was the net cast by the Nazi occupation of Europe. The differing deportation dates speak to the fact that the Holocaust took place over an extended period of time. Genocide, unlike a natural disaster or a massacre, takes time whether it is months as in the case of Rwanda or years as during the Holocaust. Similarly, the different ways in which these victims died becomes an entry



point into a class discussion of mobile killing squads, the ghettos, slave labour and the death camps.

The second part of the school programs focuses more on affective learning. Students are encouraged to appreciate the history of the photographs and their meanings while forming personal connections to some of the photographs. As part of this process, docents ask students to read survivor interviews about the journeys taken by the photographs. Although, many of the photographs were saved by families in Israel or North America, others took more dramatic journeys back into the hands of their owners. Students reflect upon some of these journeys, like that of Oscar Jason’s photograph of his young son, Monia. Oscar buried Monia’s picture outside the gates of Dachau and against all odds was able to retrieve it after the war. It remains the only evidence of his child, gassed in Stutthof in 1944.

Students learn to appreciate these kinds of emotional connections that exist between the photographs and their owners. As Lola Apfelbaum, a survivor of Skarszysko concentration camp, explains in her interview, *I keep the pictures in a frame on my television set so that I can always look at them, even though it makes me so sad to see them. I can't help but imagine them going to their deaths in the gas chambers.* Child survivor, Marion Cassirer says of her family’s photographs *They died alone, but when I saw their photos in the exhibit, surrounded by hundreds of other victims, I thought to myself, Here you are no longer alone.*

In turn, students are given an opportunity to formulate their own responses to the images. Docents invite students to find a photograph that interests them or moves them, reflect on its impact and write their responses on small comment cards. The responses have been remarkable. Students have demonstrated empathy and a strong personal identification with the victims, particularly children and young people. They have articulated a keen awareness of the tragic loss of life and a commitment to human rights.

There wasn't a single picture that touched me. They all did.
Kassandra Griffiths, Grade 11, Sir Winston Churchill Secondary

SURVIVORS RESPOND

After the war, my parents went to find my younger sister who had been placed in hiding with a Christian couple. They returned with only some photographs of her. She had been betrayed and shot during the war. Her picture brings my sister alive in my memory. It helps me to remember her in life, not only in death.
Lillian Boraks-Nemetz,
Child Survivor who escaped the Warsaw Ghetto

In 1941, my parents had a sense that something terrible might happen to them. They had these photos of themselves taken and gave copies to me and to each of my two sisters. I kept them with me always, even in hiding. At home I keep these photos close to me. It is very important for me to have them around me, always.
Susan Sienie Quastel
Survivor who was hidden in Holland

My sister Tamara died in the Holocaust at the age of four and I have no picture to remember her by. This is not only the loss of a person but the loss of her memory. I constantly try to conjure up an image of her in my mind. It feels like a double loss for me.
Ruth Sigal
Child Survivor who was hidden in Lithuania

Seeing a child or teenager and being able to relate to them affects me very deeply. The kind of life they lived, in fear, famine and desperation, saddens me almost more than I can bear.
Heather Cowie, Grade 11, Tamanawis Secondary

For the last 60 years, Jewish lives have been overshadowed by a single, almost sacred number – 6 million. This school program tries to put faces to that number. Students are invited to engage with the photos in an interactive way to help them humanise an incomprehensible statistic.

Faces of Loss

BY ROBBIE WAISMAN

The extraordinary exhibit *Faces of Loss* now on display is the conception of our Executive Director, Roberta Kremer and her staff. Initially, I thought it would serve well to fill in between our various major exhibits. I must admit that I was totally wrong, having seen the photos of the many faces of those who perished. Each one contains a heart-wrenching story of loss. There are images of mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents, spanning all ages. They look out at you and the impact is overwhelming – one wonders what might these people have been had they lived.

In my own case –I am fortunate to have just one photo of my brother Chaim, the only family photo that I have in my possession. The photo survived by some miraculous fluke. A friend of the family spotted it after the war in my hometown of Skarzysko, Poland, in the window of a photographer’s shop and retrieved it for us. The picture of my older brother in his Polish army uniform is a precious treasure that my sister Leah and I cherish. My father knew the importance of photographs and had sewn the family pictures and jewels that had been in the family for generations, into the lining of my jacket. Unfortunately, all were lost, when we were forced to undress before going into the showers in the work camps where my jacket was taken from me. I do not miss the jewellery, but would give anything to have those precious photos of those in my family that perished.

This one remaining photo brings with it so many wonderful memories – bittersweet ones. I can see my brother, Chaim at home on leave, in his elegant uniform and young ladies hanging around our home on some pretext, hoping to be noticed. I remember one exceptionally gorgeous girl named Golda. I was 8 years old and had a crush on her – I was smitten with love. I guess my brother had very good taste because he thought so too and ultimately married Golda. I had no choice but to give her up. I cannot forget the joy I had felt when the two married. The wedding party celebrated for a week.

By remembering we give hope and meaning to our own survival, and honour the memory of all our loved ones who were brutally murdered

The new couple moved into a beautiful apartment not far from our home, visited often and never missed Shabbat with us. After a year of marriage, they had their first child – a boy named Nathan. I was extremely close to him and I loved him beyond words. I was the proudest uncle in the neighbourhood. I often speculate what he might have achieved had he not perished in the Holocaust. I find this difficult and I am saddened each time I think of him. I had internalized the death of my beloved nephew, Nathan, and wonder how anyone can even attempt to grasp the death of one and a half million innocent Jewish children.



Nathan’s mother, Golda, had the opportunity to save herself by going to work into the munitions factory in Skarzysko. She chose not to abandon her little boy and left the ghetto with him packed into a cattle car heading for Treblinka.

My brother, Chaim was my hero–I loved him with all my heart. I was sure for the longest time that he had survived the war. I simply would not accept any other possibility. I was devastated when I found out the details of his death 25 years later from a friend of our family. I learned that my brother was killed during a failed attempt to escape from the work camp. To this day I find it hard to accept his death. As I get older the memories seem to intensify and the losses take on a sorrow as never before.

There was no place for thoughts or feelings during the Holocaust. To survive and to be reunited with our family was our only hope. We felt betrayed because we were told that we would be reunited with our loved ones, and then were not. Had I known the extent of my loss during my days in the camps, I am convinced that I would not have had the will to survive. After liberation, the temptation to forget and to assimilate back into a normal life beckoned to every survivor. As youngsters we were urged by well-meaning caregivers to forget and move on. How could we forget that we came out of hell, wounded and humiliated from camps or from hiding? How can one forget the enormity of that kind of loss and come to terms with the brutal annihilation of so many of our people?

I have come to realize, and I am sure many other survivors have as well, that our survival must be interpreted as a gift, a sacred trust given us to live our lives in a way that would make our parents and the loved ones who perished, proud.

The *No Longer Alone* page welcomes submissions from Child Survivors. Send submissions to the NLA editor: Lillian Boraks-Nemetz c/o VHEC, 50 – 950 W. 41st Ave, Vancouver, BC V5Z 2N7

Watching the Exhibit Grow

BY NAOMI SEIXAS

The past three months have been a powerful time for me as a program assistant at the VHEC. I have had the gift of watching the exhibit *Faces of Loss* grow. What began as a concept became over time, a deeply evocative commemorative illustration of family, community, tragedy, loss and memory.

The photos are of those who will always remain in Europe, though their images survived in the hands of family who made the journey to a new life in Canada. Understanding that the existence of this collection of photos depends on the survival of a family member is implicit in the arrangement of the photographs. *This is’s mother, grandmother, husband, child.* Students write letters to those who survived, while we all bear witness to those who did not.

I bore witness as I interviewed the owners of photographs about their murdered relatives. Some had many photographs, for others only a single image of an entire family remained. Some cried for relatives they knew, others for relatives they did not. Children of survivors recited names and stories that were passed on to them along with the photographs. Sometimes the information was fragmented yet the desire for inclusion was immense.

The exhibit grew. One wall went up, then another and another with 30 to 50 photographs added weekly. Individual snapshots were clustered together in family groupings. Text was mounted in the form of intentionally quiet quotes, subtly asking the viewer to contemplate humanity, probing for reflection.

From this small community of Vancouver, there was evidence of so many people who were lost in the Holocaust, so many lives remembered.

Contributors came back to see their photos mounted and saw that they belonged to a community of loss. Students came in to learn about the Holocaust and saw mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. I listened. I looked. I read and said their names. I acknowledged their existence and I mourned their fate.



DONATIONS TO THE LIBRARY

From January to March, 2005

Wladyslaw Fejkiel, *Wiezniarski Szpital W KL Auschwitz*. Oswiecimiu: Muzeum w Oswiecimiu, 1994. Donated by Claude Romney.

Auschwitz 1940-1945. Oswiecimiu: Muzeum w Oswiecimiu, 1995. Donated by Claude Romney.

Lucy Dawidowicz. *The War Against the Jews*. New York: Bantam, 1975. Donated by Claude Romney.

Ian Thomson. *Primo Levi*. London: Vintage, 2003. Donated by Claude Romney.

Efraim Zurof. *Worldwide Investigation and Prosecution of Nazi War Criminals*. Los Angeles: Simon Wiesenthal Center, 2004. Donated by Efraim Zurof.

Gudrun Pausewang. *The Final Journey*. New York: Puffin Books, 1998. Donated by Theresa Rogers.

Patricia Marchak. *Reigns of Terror*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2003. Donated by Patricia Marchak.

Peter W. Schroeder and Dagmar Schroeder-Hildebrand. *Six Million Paper Clips: The Making of a Children’s Holocaust Memorial*.

Minneapolis: Kar-Ben Publishing, Inc, 2004. Donated by Phyllis Simon.

Jankiel Wiernik. *A Year in Treblinka*. Warsaw: Rada Ochrony, 2003. Donated by Michael Halber.

Plan of Symbolic Stones. Treblinka: Museum To Fighting and Martyrdom, 1999. Donated by Michael Halber.

Schoschana Rabinovici. *Thanks To My Mother*. New York: Dial Books, 1998. Donated by Deborah Ramm-West.

Gitel Donath. *My Bones Don’t Rest In Auschwitz*. Montreal: Kaplan, 1999. Donated by Deborah Ramm-West.

Simone Zelitch. *Louisa*. New York: Berkley Books, 2000. Donated by Deborah Ramm-West.

Elie Wiesel. *All Rivers Run To the Sea: Memoirs*. New York: Schocken Books, 1995. Donated by Judith Nagy.

Martin Goldsmith. *The Inextinguishable Symphony*. New York: Wiley, 2000. Donated by Judith Nagy.

A very special thank-you to Jeffrey Narver for his generous donation of 60 titles and to Nathan Cannon for his donation of 12 titles.

The Berlin Hagadah: 1936

BY DR. RICHARD KOOL

Documents can sometimes speak with a voice more subtle than memory. That subtlety is well exhibited in a Hagadah published by the Berlin Jewish community in 1936 and recently re-discovered in the possession of Mrs. Steffi Porzecanski of Victoria.

Steffi was born in Berlin in 1920, and grew up in a home affiliated with the Liberal Jewish movement led by Rabbi Leo Baeck. The Hagadah, as Steffi remembers, came to her while she was living at a boarding school in Lausanne, Switzerland. Sent there by her parents to learn French after the Nuremberg Laws were enacted in 1935 and she could no longer study in Germany, she found herself in a context with no other Jewish students. Her parents sent her this Hagadah for Passover as well as a small Siddur (prayer book), which she still has, and which she could use when she went to the synagogue for Friday night services. When she returned to Germany after 18 months in Switzerland, she brought those two books among her other possessions.

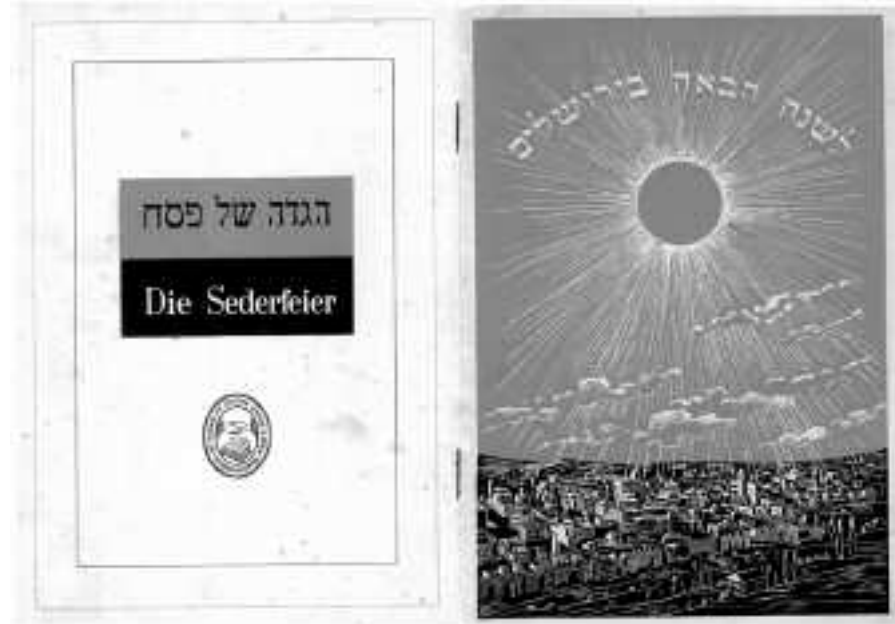
As the Nazi nightmare began to swirl closer and closer to her family, Steffi’s parents tried to get the family out of Germany. Her father was imprisoned for three months, and his imprisonment stopped their work towards emigration. Terrified of what the future had in store, her parents tried to get Steffi and her sister on a Kindertransport to England while her father worked on getting out. In time, the two girls, mother and father, and grandmother, were able to leave for South America, and safety.

Steffi married and had children in Uruguay leaving in the early 1970s for the USA where she received an MA in Library Science from the University of Pittsburgh. She came to Canada, eventually settling in Victoria where she is now an honoured member of the historic Congregation Emanu-El. The two books—the Hagadah and the Siddur—have accompanied her since 1935 across continents and oceans. And now, the story of the Hagadah, takes a step away from her.

*With what fervor those sitting
around the Passover table
must have dreamed and prayed
for their deliverance,
with the image of the ship Tel Aviv
in front of them, praying for
passage out of Germany.*

Before I describe the further journeys of the 1936 document, I need to explain its unique structure. On the one hand, it really is just a Hagadah, the book used by Jews around the world to structure the Passover meal, the Seder. Its cover says, in Hebrew, *Hagadah shel Pesach*, The Passover Hagadah, followed by a small logo of the Jewish Community of Berlin with two hands reaching over the tablets of the Ten Commandments. The Hagadah recounts the order of the meal, and at the same time recounts the suffering of the Israelites as slaves and ending with the exodus from Egypt. The text enjoins those at a Seder to imagine themselves as slaves, as suffering under the bondage of slavery and oppression, and to yearn themselves for freedom. And so the Berlin 1936 Hagadah has illustrations of Moses being found by Pharaoh’s daughter, of the slaves building the cities of Pharaoh, and of the parting of the Red Sea. But near the end of the story we find a more modern image, the image of a ship with the name *Tel Aviv* in Hebrew and German, and we find this just before the traditional closing *L’shana aba’ah b’yirushalaim, Im nächsten Jahr sind wir in Jersualem!* Next year in Jerusalem!

If you close the Hagadah and turn it over, you have a different book. The cover now is of brilliant orange and black with a radiant sun in the centre shining down on a woodcut representation of Jerusalem, and the Hebrew *L’shana aba’ah b’yirushalaim* above the sun. Now it gets hard. This in fact is not a Hagadah at all, but an annual report on the state of the Jewish community in Berlin for 1935-36. The authors tell us, *We have added to this report, in order that this brochure is a real Pesach gift, a short illuminated Hagadah. The story of deliverance and redemption in a new land, and the destruction of Pharaoh...* that is the Pesach gift the authors of the report offered to the Jews of Berlin.



Then the report opens with the question *How are our Jewish Schools doing?* We read that there are 10,400 children attending classes, and that there is now a grade 9 program in all elementary schools. Second, the report says *The Jewish Welfare Work has grown some more, from 18,500 persons in need of assistance in the year 1934 to 22,000 in 1936. Expenses have gone up 60% and now it is the middle class family who are mainly affected...* And so the report continues with more explanations of the care being given to an increasingly needy community, the costs of homes for senior citizens, the efforts to help travelers with passports, lists of the number of winter jackets and other clothes provided to both men and women, young and old. There was great effort being spent on helping people emigrate, with meals being provided and funds, when available, to help with transit. Finally, the last section is entitled *About advice on professions and profession changes.*

This is a remarkable document. On the surface, it tells the rather cold and objective story of the situation of the Berlin Jewish community, stating the facts but missing one important aspect: there is no discussion of cause. Why, we might ask today, are 10,400 children in Jewish schools and a grade 9 class added? The reasons are clear: by 1935, Jewish children, young women like Steffi Porzecanski, could not attend public school. Why are 22,000 people, and from the middle class, now in need of social assistance? Because of the Depression no doubt, but also because the Jews have been limited in their employment, and their businesses increasingly Aryanized. And why the emphasis on the change of professions? Because Jewish professionals—lawyers, doctors, teachers, professors—can no longer carry out their work in their fields.

And the images in the document speak of the longing to leave, to have an Exodus, to leave the land of their 20TH century Pharaoh and travel to freedom. The first picture is of a train at a station, and people are waving goodbye from the platform and farewell from the train. Who are the people on the platform? The German people? And are they waving goodbye to the Jews in the train? And are the people in the train, with their arms extended in farewell, the Jews of Berlin, expressing their relief in being able to escape from their impending doom? Soon, within a few years only, the Jews of Berlin would be on the train and the German people, and much of the Gentile world of Europe, would wave them goodbye. Or, and more likely in my opinion, is the picture one depicting the Kindertransport, with grief-stricken parents waving goodbye to children that they would likely never see again and the children on the train, not really understanding what they were in the middle of, waving farewell.

The final picture is of three ships, Spanish galleons perhaps, perhaps the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria, sailing west away from the sun rising in the east, sailing to a new world, a world away from Europe. And who is the man standing forward, near the bow, with what looks like a telescope in one hand, and a flag in the other. There is a famous image of Columbus on a boat such as this one, ironic in that the telescope was not invented for another 150 years after his famous voyage. But is the Columbus looking for a new land, perhaps, and with the flag to claim it? Such a strange picture, and yet the connection to the story of Christopher Columbus looks quite clear. Scholars have long debated about Columbus’ Jewish origins, and noted that his expedition from Spain began on the 9TH of Av, Tisha b’Av, the day on which the last Jew was to have left Spain at the end of the Spanish Expulsion.

The authors of the document seemed to walk a very fine line, a line they crossed with great subtlety. On the one hand, they obviously could not voice the facts of their persecution and the reality of their fear for their individual and collective future. But through image and understatement, they conveyed to the members of the community the reality of their collective situation, and their commitment to the future to know what was happening and what the community thought of it. The message to the Berlin Jews was clear and unequivocal, I think: get out.



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Will the Exact Number of Jewish Victims Ever Be Known?

BY JONATHAN FRIEDRICH

The fundamental claim of Holocaust deniers is that the Nazis did not murder 6 million European Jews and did not implement a policy of genocide. Holocaust denier Ernst Zundel was, until his deportation in March 2005, Canada’s most vociferous proponent of this form of anti-Semitism. His internet “Zundelsite” and his many publications are intended to convince the world that Holocaust history is in fact a hoax. One publication in which he was involved was a pamphlet entitled, “Did Six Million Really Die?” Several chapters are devoted to the wide discrepancy that exists between historians—Jewish and non-Jewish— in their estimates of the total number of Jews killed during the Holocaust. While today 6 million is the figure generally used, some respected historians believe the figure to be closer to 5 million. Holocaust deniers have used this inconsistency as “proof” that the figure has been conjured up as part of “atrocitiy propaganda.”

Zundel is of course spreading completely spurious information. He and other Holocaust deniers take advantage of the fact that exact numbers of Holocaust victims can never be known. Available statistics include a wide margin of error because not all victims of the Holocaust were registered; countless numbers of Jews were murdered in isolated actions outside the Nazis’ organized vehicle for murder or were killed by collaborators who did not keep records. Often records that did exist were destroyed by the Nazis, or were lost, burned, or damaged in military actions. In addition, different scholars have used different dates for computing the figures, a situation that results in statistical differences due to the changing national borders during the Holocaust period. Hence the question must be asked, how then do we calculate the number of Jews killed in the Holocaust and why is it important to do so?

There are several ways in which historians have been able to derive a figure nearing 6 million, and in fact these methods have not changed since the Jewish death toll was declared at the Nuremberg Trials in 1945. The Tribunal at Nuremberg declared the number of Jewish victims to be 5,700,000. The Tribunal’s calculations, as well as all subsequent ones, first examine pre-war and post-war censuses to determine the population of Jews in Europe before and after the war. The Jewish population of Europe was about 9.5 million in 1933 and it fell to roughly 3.5 million by the end of the war. In Poland for example, there were roughly 3 million Jews in 1933 and 45,000 in 1950, according to a census taken that year.

Calculating the number of Jewish victims of the Holocaust has also been carried out by examining the available documents of the Nazis and their agencies. The Nazis kept meticulous records of Jews deported to concentration camps and death camps and kept extensive lists of deportations and transports from one facility to another. Deportation lists from countries in Western Europe were in large part recovered by the Allies and although the Nazis tried to obliterate traces of their crimes towards the end of the war, many lists within Eastern Europe were recovered as well. Based largely on deportation records, it is known that the majority of Jewish

deaths, over 3 million, occurred in the extermination camps. In Auschwitz alone, between 1.1 and 1.5 million Jews perished.

Numbers of Jews who perished in the ghettos can also be estimated based on records that the Jewish councils were forced to keep. Each ghetto had to report the number of deaths by starvation, disease or fatigue to Nazi officials. The Nazis used these figures to decrease rations and space, and to rewrite forced labour lists. During 1942 and 1943 the Nazis liquidated the ghettos by deporting and murdering their inhabitants. But based largely on the information Jewish councils provided, it has been estimated that over 800,000 Jews died through ghettoization in German-occupied Europe, before the liquidations took place.

Where calculations are particularly difficult to discern are in the mass shootings carried out by the Einsatzgruppen (mobile killing units) and their collaborators in Eastern Europe. The Einsatzgruppen were to report the shootings of every Jew, Roma, and Polish dissident. Some did so with precision, including breakdowns by date, location and type of victim. More commonly, individual mobile killing units did not document their operations with such scrupulous care, and reported only rough estimates. Based on Einsatzgruppen reports, approximately 1.3 million Jews in Eastern Europe were murdered in this way.

The total number of Jewish deaths during the Holocaust is usually estimated as between 5.1 and 6 million victims, with the latter being the more commonly ascribed total. Due to the chaos inherent in war and genocide, calculating figures with exactness is simply not possible. There are no figures for the number killed in isolated actions, local pogroms carried out by Nazi collaborators or for Jews shot when discovered in hiding. Despite this lack of exactness and the resulting inconsistency among historians, there is without a question of a doubt evidence to place the figure with certainty at between 5 and 6 million Jewish victims as a result of the Nazi genocide.

It is important to use these figures in order to understand the uniqueness of the Holocaust and to contextualize it within the



20TH century’s other genocides. It is important to recognize the magnitude and vast extent of the loss of life, as Jewish communities were decimated in every country in occupied Europe and Jews were murdered by almost every conceivable method. And it is important to use as accurate estimated figures as possible in order to ensure that Holocaust deniers do not have an audience.

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Rita Akselrod, for your compassion & help. Agi & Tibor Bergida

Alex Buckman, for sharing your story with us. L'Ecole Gabrielle-Roy

Peter Parker, for sharing your story with us. Aldergrove Community Secondary School, Maple Ridge Secondary School

Louise Stein-Sorensen, for sharing your story with us. Woodland Park Elementary School

Mark Weintraub, for a wonderful, informative program. Gloria, Gerri & the Survivor Drop-In Group

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Rabbi Bregman, on 25 Years of devoted service. Amalia Boe Fishman & Family

Morris Chernov, Happy 90th Birthday. Jocy Lowy

Bailee Cohen, on your Bat-Mitzvah. Beyond Sound

Mel Davis, happy 60th Birthday. Leon & Beth Bogner, Cathy & Jerry Goldman

Carrie Diamond, happy 45th Birthday. Leon & Beth Bogner

Mariette & Sid Doduck, on your 50th Wedding Anniversary. VHEC Board & Staff

Dr. Larry Shafron & Dr. J. Moskowitz, on your honour from the Texas Torah Institute. Beth, Leon, Darren, Karly, Jonathan & Isabella Bogner

Valentine Farkas, Happy 60th Birthday. Shoshana & Moshe Fidelman

Saul Gelfand, Happy 90th Birthday and 60th Wedding Anniversary. Jocy Lowy

Rochelle Gelman, Happy 80th Birthday. Clarine & Judy Globerman

Anita Goodman, Happy Birthday. Birdie, Leonard, Brenda, Jonathan & Michael Wall

Pat Killiam, Happy Birthday. Birdie Wall.

Muriel Moster, Happy 80th Birthday. Larry & Miri Garaway

Mark Ottenbrite, Happy 50th Birthday. Marie Doduck, Sue Hector, Jody Dales

Renee Pomerantz, on your achievement. Gloria Robbie Waisman & Family

Joseph Segal, on your 80th Birthday. Harvey & Jody Dales.

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Philip & Shirley Swartz, on your 50th Wedding Anniversary. Alex Swartz & Arnold Swartz

Stephen & Susan Tick, on the birth of your Grandson. Craig & Carrie Diamond

Edith Vizer, on your 90th Birthday. Gerri & Gloria & The Survivor Drop-In, VHEC Board & Staff

Ernest Wakefield, Happy Birthday. Birdie Wall

Ida Wakefield, Happy Birthday. Birdie Wall

Stephanie Watt, Happy Birthday. Jocy Lowy

Lillian Zenther, on your 65th Birthday. Karen & Perry Trester & Family.

Gary Zlotnick, on your 50th Birthday. Beth & Leon Bogner

Marla Tenby, a VHEC gift membership has been purchased for you by Lionel Tenby

Larry & Jackie Shafron, on your achievement. Robbie & Gloria Waisman

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Ron Appleton & Family, sorry to hear about your mother. Jocy Lowy & the boys

Linda Arato, in memory of your husband George, Izzy Fraeme & Leonor Etkin, Rosa & Elie Ferera

Norman Archeck, on the loss of your Sister-in-law & Aunt, Lillian Kobernick. Elsa Korbin

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Ethel Bellows, on the loss of your Sister. Paul & Edwina Heller

Gertrude Blum, on the loss of your husband. Rose & Ben Folk, Harry & Tillie Kositsky, Gloria, Gerri & the Survivor Drop-In Group, Jack & Margaret Fraeme

Robert Bluman, in memory of Susan Bluman. The Hossack Family, Judith Growe

Robert & George Bluman & Families, in memory of Susan Bluman. Jane Heyman, Felice Rabinovitch

Libby Carroll & Family, on the loss of your husband, father & grandfather Charlie. Frieda Miller & Danny, Jesse & Rebecca Shapiro

Rita Chapiro, on the loss of your husband Nicoli. Gloria Waisman, Gerri London & the Survivor Drop-In Group

Phil Moses & Dani Horowitz, on the loss of your Father. Anne, Zac, Aydan & Miles Alperstein, Ivor, Gaynor, Samantha & Marc Levin

Mariette & Sid Doduck, on your 50th Wedding Anniversary. Jody & Harvey Dales

Cynthia Drysdale, in memory of your Mother, Edith Sherman. Ruth & Cecil Sigal

The Menkis Family, in memory of your Mother, Sadie. Iris & Philip Dayson

Debby Freiman, D. Schwartz & Family & Mastai Family, in memory of your Mother & Grandmother. Bob Newman & Nancy Bluman

Joe Fleischer, in memory of Erika Fleischer. Norman & Phil Simon & Families

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Rome Fox & Family, on the loss of your mother, Sarah Rozenberg. Zev & Elaine Shafran, Peppa & Brad Martin & Family, Marion Cassirer & Miriam Friedberg, Leslie Spiro, Hymie & Fay Davis, Bernie & Lisa Conn, Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Amalia Boe- Fishman, Frieda Miller & Danny, Jesse & Rebecca Shapiro, Ronnie & Barry Tessler, Lisa Kafka, Gloria & Robbie Waisman, Mark & Gerri London, Alex & Colette Buckman, Sandy Shuler & Doug, Bev & Harvey Silverstone, Judy & Neil Kornfeld, Norman & Linda Gold & Family, The Shafran Family, Larry Garfinkel & Sandi Karmel, Greg, Tracey, Jordan & Daniel Rosenfeld, Frances & Gustav Grunberg, Monte & Marcy Glanzberg, Heather Wolfe, Jody & Harvey Dales, David & Cathy Golden & Family, Evelyn Kahn, Lucien & Carole Lieberman, George, Yvonne, Lanny & Lisi Rosenberg, Avie, Anita & the Perel-Panar Family, Craig & Carrie Diamond, Charlene Goldstein, Alex, Ariella & Eli Zbar, Wendy & Harry Stryer & Family, Phyllis & Michael Moscovich, The Paperny Family, Odie Kaplan, Corinne & Mark Gelfer & Family, Beth & Leon Bogner, Gisi & Bob Levitt, Marilyn & Derek Glazer, Ethel, Mathew, Michael & Jordan Kofsky, Garry, Helen, DJ, Jason, & Alicia Feinstadt, The Shtabsky Family, Sandi & Morris Bojm

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Harry & Elaine Friedman, on the loss of your Brother. Gloria & Robbie Waisman

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Harriet Frost, in memory of your Father, Jacob. Survivor Drop In Group, The Board & Staff of the VHEC

Bessie Goldman, on your loss. Leslie Spiro

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Susie & Mark Kierszenblatt, on the loss of your Mother, Erika Fleischer. The Hector Family, Rose Lewin, Les & Karen Cohen, Ed & Debbie Lewin, Doug Pulver & Lana Marks, Lisa & Brent Pullan, Marty & Paulette Fishman & Family, Lisa & Richard Weidman, Rose Marie & Zvi Mammon, Pamela Wolfman & Brad Friedman, Linda & Peter Hough & Family, Sanford, Heidi, Sean & Talia Sanford Cohen, Lori, Wayne, Lexi, Hana & Oren Balshin, Naomi Khalifa & Joe Youngson & Family, Lili & Izak Folk, Amalia, Bruce & Michelle Liapis, Lisa, Allan, Matthew, Jordan & Noah Boroditsky, Corry, Gaston, Suzy, Isador & Matty Flader, Nora Lewinsky & Family, Jeff & Lainie Moss, Lori & Claudio Guincher, Brent James & Deborah Youngson & Family, Elaine & Dave Youngson, Anita Israel & Hannah Chafetz, Roxanne Weinstein, Randy & Sheryl Morris, Charlotte & Jeffrey Bell & Family, Harry & Jeanette Greenhut, Susan Wolak-Stein, Jana & Elliot Glassman & Family, Barry Dunner & Su T Fitterman & Family, The Scheffmans & The Sharpes, Ed & Marilyn Gaerber

Shirley Kort, on the loss of Saul. Evelyn Kahn

Mr. & Mrs. Victor Liff, in memory of your brother, Oscar. Shirley, Rita & Mia Mackoff & Families

Jocy Lowy & Family, in memory of Leo Lowy. Steve Chercover

Marvin Lyons & Family, in memory of your Grandmother & Mother. Norman Gladstone & Birgit Westergaard

Lola Mendelson, on the loss of your Brother. Zvi & Rose Marie Mammon, Maurice & Nancy Benyaer

William Mendelson, on the loss of your Sister. Zvi & Rose Marie Mammon, Resia & Harry Nortman, Maurice & Nancy Benyaer

Judy Shapiro, Richard Bronstein & Family. In memory of your father and grandfather. Sylvia Polsky

Marianne Rev & Family, in memory of your Mother, Fanni Rev. Bev Spring & Alan Morinis & Family, Louise Stein-Sorensen & Ike Stein, Avi Dolgin & Ruth Hess – Dolgin, Jane Heyman, Harley Rothstein, Miriam Caplan, Myles Blank & Patricia Wallace, Mary Adlersberg & Sally Thorne, Jean Adler, David & Sidi Schaffer, Gail Wynston, Staff of Grandview Woodlands Mental Health, Bob Bluman & Nancy Newman,

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Connie Rubin & Family, on the loss of Hal. Daeniela Bheaumont & Steven Berne & Family,

Peter & Shelley Schreter & Families, on the loss of your dear Father & Grandfather. Goldie & Avrum Miller, Frieda Miller & Danny Shapiro

Charna Shapiro, on the loss of your Husband, Sylvia Polsky

Lotti & Shael Smith, in memory of your Father & Grandfather, Maurice Smith. Bob Bluman & Nancy Newman.

Vulf Sternin, in memory of Maya Sternin. Ruth & Cecil

Rachel Kozafki & Steven Gedes, on the loss of your Father. Jocy, Gary, Steven & Richard Lowy

Rachel Stone, in memory of your Brother, Oscar. Shirley, Rita & Mia Mackoff & Families

Birdie Wall, in memory of Joe Wall. Judith & Graham Forst, Mr. & Mrs. Ernest Wakefield, Ed & Sandy Oser

Leonard & Brenda Wall & Family, on the loss of your Father. Peter & Cheryl Hochfelder, Vivian & Ken Rozenberg & Family, Hildy &

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Sandy Wosk, in memory of your Father. Danny Wienstein & Charlotte Berman

Ivan & Marshav Young, in memory of your Father. Sharon Yuditsky (Mandel)

Paul Zysman, in memory of Mania Zysman. The Canadian Association of Private Language Schools

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