The VHEC will celebrate its 10th Anniversary starting in the fall of 2004. For more information please contact Roberta Kremer, Executive Director of Intelligence and subsequently as devoirar@shaw.ca at the VHEC. For more information contact Debbie Jacob at 604.224.1922 or by email: devoirar@shaw.ca

The Post War Photographs of Henry Ries: The Rothschild Hospital & The Exodus

July 12 – September 15, 2004

These tell the story of waiting, they speak of coming and going. But waiting is the true agony of the DP’s. – Henry Ries

The Berliner Henry Ries

BY SHARON MEEN

Ries was 16 years of age when the Nazi formed the government of Germany in 1933. Two nasty early encounters affected him deeply: first, a newly appointed biology teacher singled Ries out to praise his perfect Aryanism — blond hair, blue-eyes, and particularly the “musical back of [his] head.” Classmates’ giggling prompted Ries to taunt the teacher: “I am 100% Jew.” He was immediately expelled. Shortly thereafter, he was arrested at his grandmother’s home and immediately expelled. Shortly thereafter, he was arrested at his grandmother’s home and expelled. He was put in a camp. Ries realized that he would have to get out, not just out of Berlin but out of Germany. He returned to the States and in 1953, established himself as a successful independent artist in Manhattan. His photographs are exhibited throughout the world, and he is author of eight books. He made New York his home, traveling frequently to Germany, particularly to Berlin.

“Straightforward,” is, however, not the right word. His autobiography, Ich war ein Berliner: Erinnerungen eines New Yorker Fotografen (I was a Berliner: Memories of a New York Photographic, 2001) describes a highly complex life, one shaped indelibly by the intricate interrelationship between the German world he had left behind and his new life in America.

Ries’s life history seems straightforward: he was born in 1917 in Berlin, the second of three children in a bourgeois, secular, Jewish family. As a young adult of 21 years, Henry emigrated to the United States. In 1943, he became an American citizen and then served in the Asian theatre of war. In 1945, he returned to Europe and Germany, first as a member of the American 01 (Office Director of Intelligence) and subsequently as The New York Times photographer for Western Europe. In 1952, he returned to the States and in 1955, established himself as a successful independent artist in Manhattan. His photographs are exhibited throughout the world, and he is author of eight books. He made New York his home, traveling frequently to Germany, particularly to Berlin.

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PART-TIME ASSISTANT ADMINISTRATOR/RECEPTION POSITION

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre is looking to fill a part-time temporary position by August, 2004. Responsibilities of the Administrative Assistant include processing tribute cards, booking school resources, and general office reception including phones and sorting mail. Candidates must have good English communication skills, be computer literate, be precise, organized and able to multi-task and work with a complex client base. The position is for a maximum of 16 hours per week, over three days. The position will begin in the fall of 2004 and run until May 2005. For more information please contact Roberta Kreamer, Executive Director, Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre 604.264.0499.

Cover: Red Cross nurse with refugee children on their way to the Pöppendorf Displaced Persons camp in Germany, September 9, 1947, Photo: Henry Ries

The Rothschild Hospital & The Exodus

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To get to the United States actually took Ries four years, the unending financial and moral support of his grandmother, three transatlantic voyages, amazing good luck, and nerves of steel. In October 1937, Ries obtained a one-year visitor’s visa to the States. His hope was that he could quickly turn visitor into resident status, and indeed, shortly after his arrival in New York City, he obtained the required affidavit for immigration. One small hitch; American policy required that the affidavit be signed other than within the States. With relative optimism, Ries returned to Germany in November 1937; the American consul would, however, not sign. Ries therefore risked all and set sail again for the States in January 1938. His argument? That his one-year visitor’s visa was valid for more than one entry within the designated year. Challenged by the ship’s first officer and instructed to disembark in England, Ries made a bet directly with...
Believing that Berlin might well be on the edge of ruin, he decided to assemble a memorial collection of photographs.

the ship’s captain — the captain should contact the American consul in London to settle the question of the visa’s validity. When the Consul confirmed that Ries was right, the captain honored the bet (defying his Nazi first officer in the process) and Ries sailed on. By July 1938, having made a final trip to Cuba to get his affidavit signed, he had his American immigration visa.

With cessation of hostilities in Europe in May 1945, Ries returned to Europe (first London, then Berlin) to contribute his photographic and linguistic skills to sorting out the chaos. He first worked for oscors (Office Military Government United States), translating documents such as Hitler’s will and reports about medical experimentation in the concentration camps, as well as photographing the doctors on trial at Nuremberg. In November 1946, he became The New York Times photojournalist for Western Europe. His photographs captured the essence of the “devastation and desperation” of the shattered continent — the 1947 photographs of the Rothschild-Spital in Vienna, on exhibit at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre in summer 2004, illustrate this. In 1948, Ries was again in Berlin — the centre of action in the first days of the Cold War — to photograph the Blockade and Airlift. His photograph of “Die Rosinenbomber” (the Raisin Bombers) is considered one of the definitive pictures of the twentieth century.

In 1953, Ries returned to New York City and in 1955 set up his own studio. His explorations of abstract photo techniques, particularly the development of Helioptic, took him into new fields of artistic endeavor. Yet, almost inevitably, his own history — “being Jewish German, born in Berlin, living in New York” — pulled him back to Berlin. In 1957, after an absence of 20 years, he participated in Berlin’s 25th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift and the Raisin Bombers. This visit, particularly his first viewing of the Wall, prompted renewed exploration of themes related to identity, guilt and historical responsibility. Seven books (particularly Abschied von meiner Generation, 1992 [Farewell to my Generation]), exhibits, radio and television documentaries, and lectures reflect his thoughts and perceptions.

Believing that Berlin might well be on the edge of ruin, he decided to assemble a memorial collection of photographs.

When Ries left Berlin in 1937 carrying his memorial photos with him, he vowed never to return. Ironically, photography not only took him back to Berlin but also made him world famous, where he remains more well known than in North America. He died in New York on May 24, 2004.

The exhibition of photographs by Henry Ries was originally produced by Galerie Bilderwelt, Berlin, in 2002 and was shown in Graz and Molling, Austria.

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In Austria, the u.s. Army was unable to handle the influx of Jews on its own and therefore assigned the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee the task of overseeing any Jewish refugee situation. The cjc had been founded during wwi as a relief and rescue agency for European Jewish communities. Towards the end of wwi the cjc entered the liberated areas of Europe and began a massive relief effort. They created services to help Holocaust survivors trace their relatives, gather educational supplies, and get training in order to reenter the work force. As well, they played a key role in the administration of many of the cjc camps.

In a time when almost all Jewish establishments were under attack everywhere else, the Hospital actually managed to attract prominent Jewish physicians.

In particular, the Joint Distribution Committee was influential in the revitalization of the Rothschild Hospital and its transformation into a makeshift Displaced Persons camp. The cjc carried out relief operations to collect Jews from Poland, Hungary and Romania and to organize their arrival in stages in the new Rothschild Hospital camp. Initially, the new found camp was aimed at the rehabilitation of sick refugees. It had a capacity of 600, at any given time. However, as streams of Jewish migrants continued to enter Vienna, the Rothschild Hospital was reconfigured to accommodate the large influx of people. Between 1945 to 1951, when most western European cjc camps were finally dismantled, more than 250,000 Jewish refugees had passed through them. During this time the Rothschild Hospital had become a major transient camp, receiving thousands of Jewish orps arriving from the east and eventually transferring them to any one of Austria’s eight larger cjc camps further west. From there, the process of “illegal” immigration to Palestine would often be set in motion. The Rothschild Hospital served as a stepping-stone in the mass migration.

In 1960 the Israeli Ministry of Culture sold the Rothschild Hospital to the Viennese Chamber of Commerce which in turn built a research institute on the site. It was the final chapter in the Hospital’s long and, at times, tumultuous history. Since its inception in 1873, the Rothschild Hospital was intended to do one thing— serve the Jewish community. And despite the challenges it faced at the hands of the Nazis, the Rothschild Hospital, managed, almost without fail, to serve this purpose.

Unlikely Heroes
A sincere thank you to all those who helped make the Patron Lunch and the film screening of Unlikely Heroes, on May 30, 2004, such a tremendous success.

Special kudos to the members of the Unlikely Heroes Event Planning Committee: co-chair Leslie Diamond & Robie Waisman, committee members: Jody Dales, Sheryl Davis-Kahn & VHCC Staff: Cedar Morton, Jonathan Friederichs, Sarah Rueter, Rome Fox & Roberta Keener.

Special thanks to the following: The Kahn Family, Eddie’s Hang-Ups, Stongs Market Ltd., Larry Currie/Live, Olive Press, Dan-D-Pac Foods Ltd., Granville Island Florist, Vancouver Talmud Torah High School, Harvey Sandler, L’Chaim Catering, The Vancouver Jewish Men’s Choir: Arnold Selwyn, David Bogdanov, Ed Lewin, Steve Herman, Geoff Berkov, Jeff Fraime, Malcolm Lefcort, Maurice Mans, Murray Fraime, George Sommers, Chuck Herman & Afadz Barmania, manager, Cineplex Odeon Oakridge Theatre. Carole Lieberman, Dexter Realty

New Korczak Monument in Warsaw
On September 19, 2003, at the plaza of Warsaw’s Palace of Culture and Science an inaugural stone was laid, in advance of the building of a monument to Janusz Korczak. In this same spot on Sliska Street, the home for orphans run by Janusz Korczak once stood. Korczak and his orphan children were deported to Treblinka.

To commemorate Korczak’s role in advancing universal human rights and his love of children, a park will be built, surrounding the monument where children will be able to express their thoughts and feelings on what is happening around them.

Through the Janusz Korczak Association of Canada, single bricks can be purchased, which will be installed at the monument. The bricks will bear the names of individual donors. These bricks will be used to create a mosaic of support around the monument. For more information, kindly contact Mrs. Gina Dimant, 604.733.6386.

Give a gift of insight and inspiration, through the words of Anne Frank, to thousands of students.

A Book in Every Hand
You can place The Diary of Anne Frank in the hands of BC students

The Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre will provide thousands of copies of the diary to students visiting the Anne Frank: A History for Today exhibit as part of the Centre’s 10th anniversary celebration.

A minimum donation of $100 provides books to 20 students. Each book will be inscribed with the name of the donor or a personal dedication. Donations from individuals, families and organizations are welcome. For more information please contact the VHCC at 604.264.0499.
The Girl in the Red Coat
By Roma Ligocka
REVIEWED BY OTTILIE SCHWEITZER
Roma Ligocka was born in Krakow in 1938. She tells her story with great insight into the agony of childhood in the face of terror, deprivation and death. Clearly, the ambience of the Krakow Ghetto in which she and her parents find themselves and the loss of her beloved grandmother, are beyond her understanding, at the time. She describes the escape with her mother from the ghetto as a dismal journey towards survival.

The agony of that survival is vividly portrayed in her sense of loss of childhood and the search for her identity. She seeks this identity in a child seated at a table, with her parents, in the Hotel Ceresco in Nice and more poignantly in the fleeting impression of a little girl in a red coat in Steven Spielberg’s film, Schindler’s List.

She describes with authenticity her search for self determination and artistic freedom amidst post war anti-Semitism and Communist oppression, a fate shared by her cousin, Roman Polansky. Her memoirs reflect a sense of yearning for peace and stability in adult life. To some extent, she finds this in her son, Jacob, and in her profession as a renowned stage designer. Roma Ligocka is a skilled story-teller. She has fulfilled her mission to give testimony to the horrors and injustice of wrongly conceived politics. We owe her a sense of urgency to remedy prevailing conditions worldwide. Every child has a right to grow up in a secure environment.

The Girl in the Red Coat was first published in German and has subsequently been translated into ten languages.

Still Alive
By Ruth Kluger, with a forward by Lore Segal
REVIEWED BY OTTILIE SCHWEITZER
On March 12, 1938, Hitler’s Germany annexed Austria. Ruth Kluger was seven, when events overtook her family, as well as the Jewish Community. She describes her experiences through the eyes of a child, puzzled at first by guarded items of conversation, which she soon learns to interpret as indescribable threats to her family. The arrest of her father and his subsequent forced departure to Italy, confirms her fears. After his departure she and her mother are forced to live in overcrowded accommodation. There are family fights precipitated by stresses, proximity and the inability to escape from Austria. She finds solace in reading books and the occasional visits to forbidden cinemas. The Hitler youth propaganda, convinces her of the approaching danger. She begins to question the decision-making process of her mother. The alienation between mother and daughter persists throughout their lives.

Their inability to leave Austria resulted in their deportation to Theresienstadt. Ruth Kluger becomes aware that Theresienstadt is not a ghetto as euphemistically called by the Germans, but a prison, a “stable for feeding the slaughter-house of the concentration camp”. This was confirmed by the clouds of smoke, which enveloped the atmosphere of Auschwitz-Birkenau on their arrival. Ruth Kluger provides an honest account of her social bonds with fellow inmates. Since she was assigned to the Children’s section, a certain amount of bonding was possible. She describes conditions of hunger, thirst, and extreme climatic conditions. The final escape from Auschwitz, was a fortuitous selection of her and her mother to a labour camp in Christianstadt. It was a sense of relative freedom that allowed her to attain her intellectual potential. In the final chapters, Ruth Kluger describes her life as a refugee in New York in the forties. She discusses with great candor and insight her ability to socialize and her deteriorating relationship with her mother. She did however, obtain a degree and is Professor emerita in German, at the University of California, Irvine. She has published five volumes of literary criticism and is the recipient of numerous literary awards. She told her story in her own words that she felt needed to be told. Still Alive was first published in German in 1992, and in English in 2000. It is an international bestseller and has won the Thomas Mann Prize and the Prix Memoire de la Shoah.

I was eight months old at the onset of the Second World War. I lived with my parents, brother and grandmother, in grandma’s house in the town of Brichan, Moldova (Moldavia). The entire story of my suffering during that tragic time has left its mark on me through the stories told to me by my mother, my brother and the townsfolk.

When the war began, and advanced rapidly on all front lines, the German and Romanian army occupied our town. From the first days of the invasion, the Nazi Romanian Gendarmes and local collaborators, tortured, beat, robbed, killed and forced all the Jews from their homes. One of the first victims of persecution was my uncle, my mother’s brother, Gandelman Lazier. He was executed by the Nazis in the presence my mother and grandmother. Many of the local collaborators with whom we lived in peace, turned against us. One of them was Shevdarak Alexei, who, in 1945, after the war, was accused of collaborating with the Nazis. My mother was a witness at his criminal trial. She also confirmed at the trial, that all Jews of our town were deported to unspecified ghettos and slave labor camps.

From the many conversations with my mother, I know that the Jews of our town were gathered and forced to walk on foot guarded by the convoy of Romanian Gendarmes. They walked along the unpaved, dusty roads of Moldova and the Ukraine.

Our long, difficult walk was especially hard on the children, women and the elderly. They were falling to the ground due to pain, fatigue, hunger and thirst. Many were left to die on the roads and sidewalks. After numerous weeks of enduring the hot sun, pouring rain, fear, illness, demoralizing treatment, exhaustion and malnutrition, we finally arrived in the town of Kupogorod, in the Vinnița Region of the Ukraine.

During that journey my parents and others took turns carrying me. On the way to the ghetto I became ill with scarlet fever, then measles, then rickets. These illnesses were made worse by the absence of medical care. They later contributed to the resulting complications of meningitis and recurrent headaches.

On arrival to Kupogorod, Ghetto, we were placed in a dark barn with many other inmates. The ghetto was located in a part of town that was surrounded by barbed wire and guarded by Romanian Gendarmes. The police, made up of the local Ukrainian collaborators were infamous for their brutality. My mother described how in the winter it was freezing cold in that barn, as we had no heating resources. In the summer it was so crowded that it was very hard to breathe the stuffy air that ensued. The inmates became sick with various kinds of infectious diseases and many died. Many died of loss of endurance in these terrible conditions.

When I grew up I asked my mother why we never visited my father’s grave. She replied that he didn’t have his own grave. When my father and my grandmother died in the ghetto from infectious diseases, their bodies were taken and buried in one pit together with other victims. Often on awakening, the inmates of the ghetto would wake up to find dead bodies lying beside them. The special service in the ghetto would carry their bodies out beyond the ghetto boundaries. Those who were still alive envied the dead.

It is painful for me to go back to the events of World War II. These recollections bring up the suffering of my family. Furthermore, these events deprived me of a normal life as a child and afterwards. I only survived in those days because my mother nursed me for a long period of time. We lived in these inhuman conditions until the liberation of the territory by the Red Army in March of 1944.

On return to Brichan, in the autumn of 1944, we found our house destroyed, all our belongings taken. We had no place to live. We continued to suffer the consequences of war for a long time afterwards. One morning, when a plane with smoke trailing behind it, passed above our head, I was crying for food, but my mother said that when they see her nurse, they will drop a bomb on our heads. That’s how I got weaned from her breast, at the age of three.

I can’t give my mother enough thanks and enough praise, for she was a true heroine. Young, pretty and kind, this woman would sacrifice herself in order to bring us up well, and with dignity. And to the end of her life she was dedicated to us, her children, and lived only for our sake.

Five years ago I came to Canada. It was a hard life for an immigrant. I knew no English, had to get used to new people, new ways. But little by little I started to step into a new life, to learn English and meet good people whom I met through the Schara Tzedek Synagogue. And now, as the title of the child survivor page in Zachor, suggests, I am “No Longer Alone.”

I am grateful to the Jewish Family Service Agency for their help. I am a member of the Holocaust Child Survivors of Vancouver, ac, with whom I gladly meet once a month, and feel their warmth and support.

March 5th – June 12th, 2004

DONATIONS

Shelia Barkowski, In honour of her role in the translation of the stories of my father, Micha Menczer

Nasimi Frein, In memory of the late Shia Muzer for his role in the translation of my father's stories. Micha Menczer

Larry & Mirti Garaway, With best wishes. Sadie Sherman

Carel Garden, In the name of the Jews of Carel Garden. Frances Hoyd

James Matz, In your honour. Jennifer Caprara

David Schaffer, for his role in the translation of my father's stories. Micha Menczer

Gordon Slobin, In celebration of your 75th birthday. The Vancouver Child Survivors Group. Jody, Harvey, Rebecca, Arieh & Eli Dales

In honour of Kathy Somer & George Somer, to the Book In Every Hand Project. Marianne Re<br>

To send a card, please call 604.264.0499. We make every effort to send cards out promptly, often within 48 hours of your call. VHEC

During the past ten years our tribute cards have remained at a minimum donation of $10 per card. As of July 1, 2004 this will be raised to a minimum tax-deductible donation of $15 per card. This is in response to the increased costs of printing, postage, & staff time. If you would like to make a donation of $75 for a card, please call 604.264.0499. We will be happy to set up a donation of $75 per card, this amount will permit a violent card to be sent promptly, often within 48 hours of your call. VHEC

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Fred Tischler & Family. We are sorry for your loss. Jessica, Brian, Josh & Elana Kimmel, Judy, Eric, Sarah & Holly Promislow
Annette Wasel & Family, Deepest sympathy on the passing of your beloved Mother & Grandmother. The Szajman Family
Sundie Yasin, In memory of Lucy Lacterman. Susan & Joe Stein

Thank You
Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, In gratitude for your inspiring presentation. Thank you from Burnaby Mountain Secondary School
Alex Buckman, Thank you for your help at our Seniors Holocaust Survivor Seder. The VHEC Staff, Gerri London & Gloria Waisman
Alex Buckman, Thank you from Heritage Park Secondary School
Mariette Doduck, In appreciation for all the work you’ve done for the community. Lillian Boraks -Nemetz
Rabbi Charles Feinberg, Thank you for leading our Survivor Seder this year. The VHEC Staff, Gerri London, Gloria Waisman & the Survivor Drop-In Group
Katy Hughes, Thank you from Cambie Secondary School
Odie & Sherie Kaplan, Thank you for thinking of me. Ben & Rose Folk
Robert Krell, Thank you for the most incredible Master of Ceremonies ever heard in this town! Mariette & Sid Doduck & Family
Janos Maty, In appreciation for your work with our project for the Chutzpath 2004 Festival. Melissa Frukman & The Blue Riff Project
Janos Maté, In appreciation for your kindness of heart & generosity of time & spirit. Miri, Larry, Orren & Kayla Garaway
Janos Matzi, Thank you for the beautiful video of mother’s party. Edwin & Betsy Menken
Karen Micner, Thank you so much for all your help at our Seniors Holocaust Survivor Seder. The VHEC Staff, Gerri London, Gloria Waisman & The Survivor Drop-in Group
Peter Parker, Thank you from John Errington Elementary School, Keith Lynn Alternate School, Rockridge Secondary School
Andy Rosengarten, Thank you for all your help at our Seniors Holocaust Survivor Seder. The VHEC Staff, Gerri London, Gloria Waisman & The Survivor Drop-In Group
Andy Rosengarten, Thank you for all your help at the Unlikely Heroes Film Screening. The VHEC Board & Staff
Rayne Todd, With appreciation. Melanie, Eric & Lenny Fleischer-Wilson
Robbie Waisman, Thank you from Aldergrove Community Secondary School