WINTER 2020

TREASURED BELONGINGS: THE HAHN FAMILY & THE SEARCH FOR A STOLEN LEGACY

A UNIQUE GATHERING: CHILD SURVIVORS CONVENE IN VANCOUVER

IHRA RECOMMENDATIONS ON TEACHING AND LEARNING ABOUT THE HOLOCAUST
THE VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE AND HILLEL BC PRESENT

INTERNATIONAL
HOLOCAUST
REMEMBRANCE DAY

IN COMMEMORATION OF THE 75TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE LIBERATION OF AUSCHWITZ-BIRKENAU

REFLECTIONS ON LIBERATION
75 YEARS LATER

MONDAY, JANUARY 27, 2020 | 1 PM
HILLEL BC, UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
6145 STUDENT UNION BOULEVARD, VANCOUVER

Holocaust survivors are invited to participate in candle lighting
EVERYONE WELCOME This event is free of charge

The program is funded through our community’s generous contributions to Federation Annual Campaign and by the Province of British Columbia. Holocaust Survivor Memoirs generously donated by the Azrieli Foundation.

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COVER: The Hahn Judaica Collection was one of the most prominent private Judaica collections of its time, rivalling those of the Rothschild and Sassoon families. Courtesy of the Hahn family.
MARCH 22, 2:30 PM
Silent Witness: A Kiddush Cup Tells a Story of Loss and Restitution, 1933–2018
Dr. Sharon Meen, Hahn family researcher

A Kiddush cup, over 260 years old, tells a dramatic story of Jewish experience during and after the Nazi regime. The cup was one of the most highly praised pieces in the outstanding private Judaica collection of Göttingen entrepreneur Max Raphael Hahn. In March 1939, Hahn was forced to surrender the cup, as well as the rest of his silver Judaica and other precious metal items, to the Nazi regime. Through an extraordinary set of circumstances, the cup was not melted down and survived the war. In 2018, the cup was restituted to Michael Hayden, grandson of Max Raphael Hahn. Now it is a highlight of the current exhibit at the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

Dr. Sharon Meen is Research Administrator, Hahn Collection, and Historical Consultant to the VHEC exhibition, Treasured Belongings: The Hahn Family & the Search for a Stolen Legacy.
"I realized I needed to bring voice to the silence," Michael Hayden told the audience at the 81st Kristallnacht commemoration presented by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre. Other than an annual phone call from his father reminding him that “Tonight is Kristallnacht,” Michael’s father remained silent about the Holocaust. This silence continued after Roger Hayden’s death in 1984. Although Michael brought 15 boxes of family documents from South Africa to Vancouver, the boxes sat unopened in his basement. Only 20 years later did Michael open them, discovering over 9,000 documents and photographs. In his address, Michael described his journey since first opening those boxes.

"My quest has been to learn about my grandparents, restore their identity, their individuality, and to bring them out of obscurity. I know their story is not particularly unique, but they were. My purpose is to give them back human form and to rescue them from dreadful anonymity. What happened to my grandparents can illuminate what happened to so many. When I decided to open the boxes, I realized that I needed to know more about my family, to bring voice to the silence, to understand what really happened—how it influenced and molded my father and how this in turn molded me. I needed to go to the places where they lived and were killed. To know what is knowable—what they taught me, what they looked like, what they wore, how they spoke and how they were killed.”

Drawing on the riches in the boxes, Hayden shared his grandparents’ story: “The life of Max and Gertrud Hahn
was one of cultured and civilized elegance. They lived in Göttingen, a city of intellect, whose scientists had earned many Nobel prizes. Family life was warm: for Max's 50th birthday, my father and aunt dressed as Meissen porcelain to honour one of Max's many collecting passions. My grandfather was a 'deep collector'— and his Judaica collection was considered equal to those of Sassoon and Rothschild. Max was a successful businessman and entrepreneur. The Hahns owned about 40 properties, were important in the leather trade and, from 1926 on, operated a shoe factory called Gallus, the Latin word for 'Hahn' or 'rooster'."

After 1933, his grandparents showed remarkable courage and ingenuity, celebrating the 75th anniversary of the Hahn business, obtaining patents for new products, and enabling their children to emigrate. Even after the rampage through the Merkelstrasse home on

Kristallnacht, Max and Gertrud believed that reason and logic would prevail: Max would quickly be released from prison and they would emigrate. But their plan failed: the June 1941 German invasion of Russia rendered their Trans-Siberian Railway tickets for July 1941 useless. On December 6, 1941, they were deported from Hamburg to Riga-Jungfernhof.

Michael turned from past to present: "I recently went to Riga-Jungfernhof—and was stunned at the total silence about the 25,000 German Jews deported to Riga. No mention whatsoever at the railway station; even the somber and serious memorial in Bikernieki forest, the place of murder, is totally anonymous. Stones identify
towns from which Jews were deported. I found stones and wrote their names and laid them on the Hamburg stone to give them back some identity. I said Kaddish and felt that I had reached a place of quiet where I knew their lives had ended and that this part of my journey was ended.

Recently, two German museums have restituted items to Max and Gertrud Hahn’s grandchildren. At both ceremonies, a political representative asked the grandchildren for forgiveness: In Göttingen, Mayor Rolf-George Köhler said: “We want to ask for forgiveness but know that we have no right to this forgiveness.” In Hamburg, Senator Carsten Brosda, Minister of Culture and Media said: “I can only ask you for forgiveness of these crimes on behalf of the Senate of Hamburg.”

“These events and this asking for forgiveness have prompted me to ask: ‘Where am I in this process?’ What we learn from Germany is never to pledge allegiance to a government irrespective of its actions. We see a country that resists the trend of rewriting history evident in other European countries; acknowledges a shameful past through public memorials such as the Berlin Holocaust Memorial and the laying of stolperstein which give names to the nameless; and confronts its difficult past through, as in one example, mandatory Holocaust education.”

“As for me personally, I’ve learned so much in this process. I have learned about my grandparents, what amazing people they were, what a loving family it was, what a tremendous loss this was. This silence that I carried for so many years was like a stowaway sitting on my shoulders and I have been able to liberate it and to think about where we are and where I am. I recognize the need for more dialogue, and I am starting to recognize my own German ancestry. I want to give up on toxic anger because forgiveness is even more important for the forgiver than for the forgiven. It allows one to move forward—not toward forgetfulness but toward some sort of resolution. I am now able to embrace a process I was unwilling to before. Memory does not wash away the pain, but there is some healing. Our grandparents are now part of our lives. My family was not annihilated. I am here to tell the story to my children and their children. We can move forward. The story continues. The silence has a voice.”

Dr. Sharon Meen is Research Administrator, Hahn Collection, and Historical Consultant to the VHEC exhibition, Treasured Belongings: The Hahn Family & the Search for a Stolen Legacy.
It took more than four decades for the concept of “child survivors of the Holocaust” to emerge and for those who would be included in that category to recognize themselves as such.

Until then, says Dr. Robert Krell, their identities as survivors and the experiences of their early lives were diminished and dismissed.

“Child survivors of the Holocaust, never mind the circumstances—hiding, concentration camp, convents, caves … not the issue—child survivors did not identify themselves because they were told by adults, ‘You were too young to remember, therefore you did not suffer,’” said Krell. “And if they did talk, they were told, ‘We don’t particularly want to hear from you, get on with your life.’”

Child survivors did, for the most part, get on with their lives. But in the late 1980s, and with the help of a groundbreaking 1988 book, *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations with Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, by Helen Epstein, more and more child survivors began to see themselves as a distinct cadre of individuals with unique experiences.

In Vancouver, on November 1–4, hundreds of child survivors came together for the 31st annual conference of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Descendants. The event was co-chaired by Mariette Doduck and Krell.

Over the weekend, survivors, as well as second, third and fourth generations and spouses, participated in more than 30 workshops, numerous panel discussions and four plenaries, as well as a Shabbat dinner and a musical conclusion that was in turn solemn and celebratory.

Over 400 people attended the conference, with about half of those being from British Columbia, with others coming from South Africa, the Netherlands, Australia, France, Israel, Germany and Poland as well as all regions of the United States. Approximately 120 survivors, 200 second generation, 50 third generation representatives and 50 spouses participated. The event was open only to survivors and their families.

“This is an intimate gathering where they [survivors] can talk about things they cannot talk about anywhere else in the world, including, usually, with their families, because here there are facilitators to assist them," said Krell, founding president of the VHEC, a psychiatrist and professor emeritus at UBC. “The facilitators are all psychologists, psychiatrists, social workers, almost all themselves second and third generation.”

When Mariette Doduck was asked to bring the conference to Vancouver, she said she would only do so if she could
get Krell on board. The pair have worked together, she said, since before the opening of the VHEC. Workshops were tailored to generations. Survivors chose from discussions including: The memories and longings that still haunt me: Is it wise to share them? and What values and messages do we want to share with our children and grandchildren? Successive generations attended groups such as Dealing with the loss of our parents and How has being a grandchild of Holocaust survivors influenced who I am? There were also forums for intergenerational dialogue. Survivors met in evening groups based on country of origin.

Plenaries included a discussion on antisemitism of the past and present, featuring Dr. Catherine Chatterley, founding director of the Canadian Institute for the Study of Antisemitism. Chris Friedrichs, professor emeritus of history at UBC spoke on partnerships between historians and survivors in telling the truth about the Shoah. In another plenary, Vancouverite Robbie Waisman, a survivor of Buchenwald, and Éloge Butera, a survivor of the genocide against the Tutsis of Rwanda, reflected on human rights activism. Krell’s plenary address, which opened the conference on the Saturday morning, was titled The Future of Our Past: Informing and Inspiring Next Generations.

Doduck was most inspired by the commitment she witnessed from children of survivors who attended the conference.

“The second generation feel an obligation and they have this feeling all over the world. When they meet, they speak exactly the same feelings and yet they’re not from the same country,” she said. The importance of these annual gatherings is “the feeling of belonging. That is what it’s all about,” she said.

The conference featured an art installation, Romanov: A Vanished Shtetl—A Living Monument in Art and Words by Malka Pishanitskaya. Rabbi Joseph Polak, child survivor of Bergen-Belsen and author of After the Holocaust the

Bells Still Ring, led Havdalah services and co-led an intergenerational dialogue on identity and spirituality. On the Sunday evening of the conference, a commemoration took place, including Cantor Yaakov Orzech singing “El Maleh Rahamim” like no one I’ve ever heard in the world, according to Krell. “And after dinner we had some youngsters, including one of my granddaughters, sing Leonard Cohen’s “Hallelujah” and that transitioned into a program by Wendy Stuart and her singers in Yiddish and Hebrew that, within 10 minutes of reticence, had everybody on their feet and dancing.”

After the music was over, Krell said attendees “did not leave the room because they needed to be together, they stayed together.”

Rose Raport came to the conference with her son David and daughter Miriam. She recently celebrated two bar mitzvahs with her grandsons. “That’s my revenge to Hitler,” she said. “We share our experiences and we share that, even through shocking experiences during childhood, if you have the perseverance to succeed, you can do it,” she said. “It’s always in my head that I’m proud of myself.” Through her now-grown children, she said, she has been able to experience the yiddishkeit and traditional Jewish home she was not able to experience in childhood.

“It was fabulous,” said Karen (Gumprecht) Komar, who came from Newton Highlands, Massachusetts with a grandchild. “This is my fifth or sixth conference and I think this has been the best of them all. It’s just been wonderful being in Vancouver, seeing what a beautiful city it is and how lovely the people are who we’ve met.”

On Monday, as the final program in the conference, attendees visited the VHEC for a preview of the exhibition Treasured Belongings: The Hahn Family & the Search for a Stolen Legacy. Komar, who was born in Hamburg, Germany, was astonished to find a direct family connection between one of the artefacts, a deportation record of the Hahn family, and her own Gumprecht relatives, who were apparently deported to their deaths in Riga, Latvia, in the same transport.

Halina Levitt, an attendee from Toronto who originated in what is now part of Ukraine, has been to several child survivor conferences.

“People sometimes ask me, why do you keep going?” she said. “I feel it’s like group therapy because all the people who attend have very similar experiences and so we understand each other. That’s a very important thing, because often you are with people who don’t have any idea as to what has happened, what hidden children were or what it means.”

One of the topics that interested her at this conference was aging and whether the past experiences of survivors impact their future and how they age.

“Quite a few of the members felt that, yes, they were very much affected,” said Levitt. “Lack of nourishment and so on, of course, affects the health.”

The World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Descendants conference was presented in association with the VHEC, the Kindertransport Association, Generations of the Shoah International and the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany.

While thanking a huge cadre of participants and volunteers, Doduck and Krell both singled out joy Fai, Krell’s professional assistant, who volunteered to serve as registrar for the conference. In addition to assisting all attendees, especially Canadian ones, in preparing for the conference, Krell credits Fai with obtaining funding that ensured survivors who wished to attend would not be precluded by financial need.

Pat Johnson is, among other things, a writer and communications consultant.
The 34 member countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, including Canada, have adopted a new and updated resource entitled Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust, published in partnership with UNESCO. These recommendations, written by a group of international experts, are crafted to help educators and teachers with fact-based and educationally sound techniques for teaching the complex and nuanced history of the Holocaust. The publication—which is aimed at policymakers, textbook editors, curriculum planners, school administrators, as well as educators and teachers—provides compelling reasons for including the Holocaust in education, gives practical guidance in the search and selection of appropriate sources, and makes it easy to bring curricula in line with the latest research.

By combining many years of specialist experience with new knowledge on the topic, the recommendations empower educators and teachers to collaborate across fields, develop their professional skills, and confidently teach about the Holocaust. Launched on December 4, 2019 at an event in Luxembourg City, which brought together representatives of ministries from the more than 30 countries that make up the IHRA, the Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust are part of the IHRA’s work to strengthen, advance and promote Holocaust education, remembrance and research worldwide. The recommendations are published in time for the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz in 1945 and the 20th anniversary of the 2000 Stockholm Declaration, IHRA’s founding document, and will be available in more than 20 languages by the end of 2020.

The full recommendations are available at www.holocaustremembrance.com/educational-materials/.

BY NINA KRIEGER

VHEC Executive Director Nina Krieger is a member of the Canadian delegation to the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.
Survivor Wall: Recognizing a Legacy of Community Builders

BY PAT JOHNSON

Robert Krell was a boy when his family joined Congregation Schara Tzedeck upon their arrival in Vancouver as Holocaust survivors in 1951. The Krells were part of an influx of survivors who came to the city; they joined the Orthodox shul because it felt familiar and went on to reinvigorate life not only in the congregation, but in the wider Jewish community.

Krell thought about the impact these families had made and wondered why there wasn’t a tangible acknowledgement of the unique contributions made by this cohort of extraordinary individuals at the synagogue.

At a moving ceremony in May 2019, a tribute wall was unveiled commemorating those survivors and the impacts they made on the congregation and the city. Krell remarked: “We Jews have been diligent and faithful to memory in recording the names of those who perished in the Shoah. Perhaps, we have not been so thoughtful in remembering the remnants that survived.”
Facing a post-Shoah world without a roadmap, these individuals gravitated to Schara Tzedeck—even those like Krell’s father Leo, whose faith was destroyed in the Holocaust—and found not only spiritual rejuvenation but other individuals who would form for them the extended families they had largely or entirely lost during the war.

“It was a remarkable group of people and I worried that they might be forgotten, not of course, by their families, their sons and daughters and grandchildren, but by our unique community, the Schara Tzedeck family,” said Krell. “And there were also survivors who had lost their first families, including their children, and had no children after the war. In fact, I do not know who recites Kaddish for them. But I think that their names should all be inscribed and remembered.”

Krell’s kernel of an idea found fruition when he went to Rabbi Andrew Rosenblatt, who responded enthusiastically. Hodie Kahn and Ed Lewin, with equal enthusiasm, agreed to co-chair the effort to realize the dream. Together with committee members Karen Cohen, Odie Kaplan, Jack Micner and Lyliane Thal, the group commissioned artist John Nutter to create a tree of life rendered in sandblasted glass and include the names of 230 survivors of the Holocaust who made Vancouver home and Schara Tzedeck their shul. At a dinner on May 3, 2019, 350 people—some the survivors who are named on the wall of commemoration, as well as the children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren of the 230 survivors—marked the occasion in what several people referred to as a “family reunion.”

Some among these families acknowledged that the existing Jewish community of the time was not as welcoming as they might have been. Krell noted that his mother had blood relations in the city but there was never an invitation extended for Shabbat. Hodie Kahn said: “I think some landings were softer than others. I am the daughter of survivors, both of whom committed...
themselves to rebuilding lives in Vancouver after the Holocaust. It wasn’t always easy for them in the early days. The community had its moments.”

As a group, said Kahn, the survivors were “incredibly passionate and committed to creating new lives and part of that was building a shul and a community while they raised their families. They built a shul family and their own family simultaneously and I think it’s really critical that we recognize this particular group because, pound for pound, they really did a lot for building up Schara Tzedeck and Vancouver’s Jewish community.”

Kahn was struck by something that happened on the night of the dedication.

“It was striking to see so many families and descendants of people who are no longer with us return to Schara Tzedeck, people who were part of other synagogues or have sort of dropped off the radar of Schara Tzedeck a little bit, come back into the synagogue space and actually go back to the seats that their families had occupied when they themselves were growing up in the synagogue,” she said. “It was coming home in a very, very profound way. It was beautiful.”

In his remarks at the dedication dinner, Ed Lewin reflected on being part of the second generation of that extended Schara Tzedeck family.

“Many of us grew up together and are friends with one another,” he said. “There is a shorthand among us. Not everything must be expressed in words. A hug speaks volumes: ‘I know you miss your parents. I miss your parents too and I know you miss mine. And I miss seeing them together.’”

Rabbi Rosenblatt said he knows of no similar tribute to survivors anywhere and he is pleased that his congregation has recognized the contributions of this distinctive cadre.

“There is something about this group that transcends ordinary friendship,” he said. “They shared certain experiences, a certain kind of instinct, and they came here and they essentially treated each other and each other’s children like a newfound family.”

The impacts they had as individuals and as families reinvigorated not only Schara Tzedeck, he said, but those individuals and their children and, now, grandchildren helped start and sustain key communal organizations, including the Jewish Community Centre, Jewish Family Services and Vancouver Talmud Torah school.

“They are a unique group because they came here penniless and many of them did quite well financially,” said Rosenblatt. “Many of them were what they like to call MDs”—sly slang for metal dealers. The Rabbi said he once asked one of those scrap metal dealers why so many Holocaust survivors had become disproportionately successful within the Jewish community.

“He said, ‘you know, we all learned that no doesn’t always mean no and that there’s often another way to do things and we learned how to sidestep or jump over a few hurdles here and there.’ This was a guy who was five-foot-nothing and used to haul refrigerators in the scrap metal business,” Rosenblatt said with a laugh.

“They also came from a generation where they knew how to sacrifice,” he added. “One of them tells the story about how his parents decided that a refrigerator was really a luxury that they didn’t need. It’s hard for us to imagine. We live in a generation where we use the word ‘need’ for the latest iPhone, which is almost indiscernibly different than the one we currently have.

“They had an internal fortitude that isn’t found today. Because they had that sense of discipline, they were able to build fortunes and they were able to be philanthropists and they were able to create legacies for their children.”

Those legacies are now permanently and tangibly recognized in the synagogue that became a focal point of their new lives after the Holocaust and where they found and built a new community after having lost so much.
In 2018 and 2019, the Hungarian child survivor Ilona Mermelstein donated a significant collection of documents and photographs to the VHEC. With the help of her grandson, Aron, a law student at the University of Calgary, Ilona communicated a deeply sad story about her grandparents and parents, one that, alongside the primary source materials in this collection, is an important contribution to the documentation of the Holocaust in Hungary.

The records donated by Ilona date back to the early twentieth century, and are excellent examples of pre-war Jewish life and the extent of the integration of Jews into Hungarian society. Ilona’s grandmother, Rozi Pollak, lost her first husband in the First World War; he disappeared, and the family never learned his fate. Rozi received benefits as a war widow, but because her husband was never found, and never declared dead, she was unable to remarry. She received a certificate of moral authority from Hungarian authorities and lived with Sandor Deneberger, the man Ilona always knew as her grandfather. Sandor served in the First World War for Hungary, and suffered what was then called “shell shock” upon his return. Ilona recalls that he played piano beautifully, volunteered in the community in support of local theatre projects and worked as a jeweller, running a successful business repairing and selling watches and other goods made of gold and silver.
In 1944, the successful Deneberger business was abandoned and its gold and silver confiscated by Nazi officials; both Sandor and Rozi were arrested by the local police chief and Nazi collaborator in their hometown of Tápiószele. Ilona remembers going over to her grandparents’ home one morning, and finding them gone, the door to their home ajar.

Town rumours led the family to believe that Rozi and Sandor had been rounded up for being Communists along with other known Communists in the town. Later, however, the non-Jewish communists returned to Tápiószele, but not the Jewish prisoners. They were moved from a prison in Budapest, separated, and sent to various camps with other Hungarian Jews. Both Rozi and Sandor wrote postcards home to their daughter, Klára, who was in hiding with Ilona. Sandor was interned in Nagykanizsa, the closest internment camp to Tápiószele, and Rozi was interned in Kistarcsa, a transit camp. Postcards in the collection indicate a focus on daily family matters, and request lard, information about their daughter’s wellbeing, and concerns about their home and neighbours. These postcards are the last communication received by the family from Rozi and Sandor.

Sandor was deported to Auschwitz, likely in late May, 1944. Rozi wrote a card home from Kistarcsa on June 29, 1944; she may have been anticipating her return home and did not sound concerned in her correspondence. The Hungarian Regent Miklós Horthy de Nagybánya had halted the deportation of Hungarian Jews around this time, in response to international pressure. Then, on July 14, 1944, Adolf Eichmann restarted the deportations. Rozi was among the last of the Hungarian Jews deported from Kistarcsa to Auschwitz.

While in hiding, Ilona remembers being very hungry, and the food she and her mother, Klára, relied on to survive included candy she’d pretended to feed her favourite doll. The two removed her doll’s paper mâché head and retrieved the sweets she’d inserted into her doll’s mouth while playing. This doll was deeply connected to her survival; Ilona was able to keep it in the years after the war until one day she left it outside overnight, and it was ruined in a rainstorm. She held a burial service for the doll—she treasured photographs of it her entire life. These photographs, of Ilona with the doll that sustained her while she was in hiding, are now in the VHEC’s collection.

After the war, Ilona and her mother came out of hiding and reunited with her father, Daniel, who had been forced into labour by the Hungarian government and worked on German military aircraft in Budapest. They fought to get Rozi and Sandor’s home back after it had
been confiscated; a deposition supporting the family’s claim is also in the collection. Eventually, the town of Tápiószele built a memorial to their Jewish residents killed in Auschwitz, and Sandor’s and Rozi’s names are both inscribed, as are the names of Sandor’s extended family and the parents of a Jewish doctor who had hidden with Ilona and her mother.

Ilona and her mother always told each other “I love you” before bed each night. This practice stemmed from a story Klára told her daughter about the night before Rozi and Sandor’s disappearance. Klára was worried that her mother was working too hard, doing too much around the house, too much child care, pushing herself too hard; the family had to compensate for the loss of Klára’s husband to the forced labour camp. Klára yelled at Rozi in frustration, and the next morning Rozi was gone. Ilona tells about how, when her mother was in an old age home in the next village over from where she lived, every night, even in the worst snowstorm, when the staff of the care facility were sure no one would venture outside, she came to tell her mother she loved her, before Klára fell asleep.

I am grateful to Ilona, her grandson, and the VHEC’s volunteer translator George Szasz, for their time and generosity while processing the papers and photographs in this remarkable collection of materials. The collection can be browsed in its entirety here: https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/collections/729

Shyla Seller is the Archivist of the VHEC.
The VHEC has recently completed a digitization project funded by the IK Barber BC History Digitalization Project: all issues of Zachor, and issues of its predecessor, the VHCS Update, are now available for research and reference on our website.

These newsletters and magazine communicate with VHEC members and the wider public about the Centre’s programs, events and current issues related to human rights, social justice and Holocaust education. They feature original writing from Holocaust survivors, their families and other community members, including teachers and students.

This digitization project, completed by Archives Assistant Lorenzo Camerini, makes the history of the Centre more accessible; we encourage our members to explore these early issues of the newsletter. Eventually these will also be entered in the library catalogue on collections.vhec.org.

The VHEC is grateful to the Library and Archives of Canada’s Documentary Heritage Communities Program (DHCP) for funding to arrange and describe institutional records documenting our commemorative and educational events. The DHCP invests $1.5 million annually to ensure that Canada’s continuing memory is documented and accessible to current and future generations. The program is designed to work with local documentary heritage organizations, in order to increase their capacity to better sustain and preserve Canada’s documentary heritage. Members of the DHCP team offered the VHEC technical advice in the areas of preservation processes, standards and equipment.

This past fall the VHEC completed its grant-funded collection, cataloguing and access activities related to our symposia and events programming, going back to the early 1990s. By working on these materials we will be able to better provide information about and access to records documenting Holocaust commemoration in BC over a 35-year period.

Do you have documentation relating to pre-1994 events organized by the VHCS? If so, please contact Shyla Seller, Archivist, to learn more about our work documenting the history of Holocaust educational and memorial event planning prior to the opening of the doors of the VHEC.

Following the conclusion of his contract at the VHEC, Lorenzo Camerini accepted the role of Archivist at the Arolsen Archives in Bad Arolsen, Germany. The Arolsen Archives are an international center on Nazi persecution with the world’s most comprehensive archive on the victims and survivors of National Socialism. The collection has information on about 17.5 million people and belongs to UNESCO’s Memory of the World. It contains documents on the various victim groups targeted by the Nazi regime and is an important source of knowledge for society today.

For further information and to search the online archive: https://arolsen-archives.org/en/
VHEC Collections Website Receives Provincial Recognition

In October 2019, the VHEC received the Award of Merit: Excellence in Collections from the British Columbia Museums Association for our Collections Management System, which provides access to Western Canada’s largest collection of Holocaust-related artefacts, survivor testimonies, archival materials and publications.

The Award of Merit recognizes recent excellence in collections best practices, which may include innovative approaches to collecting, collections management, preservation, repatriation, collections-based research, dissemination and accessibility.

This is a very significant achievement and we are honoured to receive acknowledgement for our collections activities from the BCMA. Visit our award-winning collections website: https://collections.vhec.org/

The Award of Merit is a wooden owl hand-carved by David and Anna Hall of Comox, BC. Courtesy Illiene Yu.

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

COLLECTIONS

Many Holocaust survivors and their families have Holocaust-related artefacts, even the smallest of which can tell an important story. Artefacts can support research and education, and reach a broad audience through the VHEC collections website and the Centre’s exhibitions and programs.

THE VHEC COLLECTS MATERIALS RELATED TO:

• the Holocaust and the experience of Holocaust survivors;
• the experience of antisemitism and efforts to leave Europe as the result of the rise of Nazism and increased persecution;
• the experience of liberation, and the immediate post-war period including the experience of refugees in Displaced Persons camps;
• post-war immigration of Holocaust survivors to Canada;
• the experience of Jewish refugees interned in Canada;
• Nazi-produced propaganda and other documentary evidence of antisemitism;
• Anti-Nazi propaganda produced during the prewar, wartime, and immediate post-war period;
• Pre-war Jewish life in Europe.

Types of materials in the VHEC’s collections include albums, diaries and scrapbooks; correspondence and stamps; education and research materials; identity documents; travel documents; propaganda; photographs; publications including rare books; ephemera; religious belongings; and audio-video recordings.

For more information about donating to the archives and collections, please contact the VHEC directly.

COLLECTIONS.VHEC.ORG
604.264.0499 | collections@vhec.org
Library Acquistions: Discover some of the newest additions to the VHEC

BY SHANNON LABELLE

Auschwitz: not long ago. not far away.
EDITED BY ROBERT JAN VAN PELT, WITH LUIS FERREIRO AND MIRIAM GREENBAUM
NEW YORK : ABBEVILLE PRESS PUBLISHERS, 2019
Library call number: REF 940.5317 A932au 2019 (Reference Collection)
Catalogue record: https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/7895

The persecution of the Jews in photographs. The Netherlands 1940–1945
RENÉ KOK AND ERIK SOMERS
ZWOLLE, NETHERLANDS : WBOOKS, 2019
Library call number: 949.2071 K79p
Catalogue record: https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/7900

Schara Tzedeck Shoah survivors tribute book
CONGREGATION SCHARA TZDECK
VANCOUVER, BC : CONGREGATION SCHARA TZDECK, 2019
Library call number: REF 971.133 S311 2019 (Reference Collection)
Catalogue record: https://collections.vhec.org/Detail/objects/7669

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[REVISED AND UPDATED EDITION] / DINA GOLD
CHICAGO : ABA PUBLISHING, AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION, 2016
Library call number: 940.5314 G61s
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R. J. PALACIO
NEW YORK : ALFRED A. KNOOP, 2019
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Witness: passing the torch of Holocaust memory to new generations
COMPILED BY ELI RUBENSTEIN WITH MARCH OF THE LIVING
TORONTO : SECOND STORY PRESS, 2015
Library call number: 940.5315 M315 2015
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Embracing the Past: A Glimpse Into My Recent Visit to Kiev

BY LUCIEN LIEBERMAN

Late in November 1928, two brothers, Leo Lieberman (33) and Sam Lieberman (29), embraced at the Calgary Canadian Pacific Railway station. Sam was escorting their parents back to Russia after a five-year stay in Alberta. The parents were elderly and could not manage the trip on their own. Sam expected to return to Canada once their parents were settled in Kharkov. He never returned. Their last words were about Leo's new winter coat. “Leo, I like your coat. Where I am going you can't find such a coat.” So, the brothers exchanged garments. They were not to meet again until 1966 when Leo and his wife Clara went to the Soviet Union to try to find family.

I grew up in Calgary aware of the fact that my parents had both left large families in Russia and that the Second World War had devastated those families. Sam's story was tragic. He worked in Moscow in the 1930s as a translator. When the war came he was taken into the army and survived four years in combat roles. He was wounded. In 1946 he was arrested, charged and tried for the offence of being “antisocial to the regime” and sent to the Gulag where he labored for 10 years in a camp beyond the Arctic Circle. After Stalin’s death he was discharged and allowed to return to his city of last residence, Chernivtsi in the Ukraine. There he married a younger woman and, at the age of 57, fathered a son, Gregory (Grisha).

In 1991, after both my parents died, I received a letter from another branch of the Lieberman family who had left the dissolving Soviet Union and arrived in New York. Within months I arranged a visit to this family in Brooklyn. The following year, the Brooklyn cousin brought her 14-year-old son to sit on the bimah at Beth Israel Synagogue at my son Jeffrey’s bar mitzvah. In subsequent visits with this family in New York we learned that Grisha had a daughter Tina, who had established a singing career in the Ukraine. In fact, she was the Ukrainian's star candidate in the 2006 Eurovision
Song Contest at age 21. When we learned she was going to appear in a concert in Brooklyn we arranged for Jeffrey to meet her. After this meeting, we contacted Grisha by phone in Kiev. This was followed by many Skype visits, and in May 2019, we arranged an eight-day visit to Kiev.

Although we stayed with Grisha and Svetlana in their two bedroom apartment, many of the arrangements for our visit were made by their daughter Tina. On day five, Tina arranged for a guided tour of Babi Yar with an English-speaking local woman, Ludmilla. Babi Yar is now a beautiful treed park approximately a kilometre square in the northwest outskirts of Kiev. On September 29, 1941, Nazi troops rounded up Kiev’s 34,000-strong Jewish Community and massacred the lot within 48 hours. Victims were shot and buried in the ravine. The Nazis then rounded up the local Romani people and residents of mental hospitals and extended the killing. During the two-year Nazi occupation over 100,000 bodies were dumped into the Babi Yar ravine. When the Red Army recaptured the city in 1943 there were only 80,000 people in Kiev, one-fifth of its former population.

After the end of the Second World War the victorious allies set out to research that period of history which we now define as “The Holocaust.” Two key researcher/writers were the Russian Jewish journalists Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman. Both men were prominent Red Army war correspondents who witnessed first-hand the fighting on the Eastern Front. When it came time to distribute their work, the Soviets refused to publish a Russian edition. The work was published in the West as the “Black Book.” A copy resides under lock and key in the VHEC library as a rare book. The Russian leadership decided that the information within it contained too much about nationalist collaboration with the invading Nazis.

Fifteen years later, the famous youthful Russian poet Yevegeny Yevtushenko, who had a reputation in the Soviet Union akin to Elvis Presley in the West, wrote a poem entitled Babi Yar; the poem’s the first line reads “No monument stands over Babi Yar.” Moscow authorities had kept the story under wraps but then allowed a Russian magazine to publish a serialized documentary novel by Anatoly Kuznetsov, a resident of Kiev. Kuznetsov was only 12 years old when the massacre occurred in his neighborhood. He buttressed his boyhood recollections by studying the leaflets, posters and newspapers of the occupation period, interviewed persons who had survived and wove the whole into a striking narrative. The publication (also available in the VHEC Library) was a sensation and caused the Communist government in Moscow to initiate plans for monuments to be placed on the site. The first and largest made no mention of the death of Jews but instead used the words “Soviet Citizens.” The most impressive monument commemorates the over one million Ukrainians (mostly youth) who were shipped as slave labour to work in
German war plants. Many did not survive this period.

Today there is little evidence of a deep ravine, only undulating terrain. There are numerous monuments, some remembering the many children killed, several with Hebrew inscriptions and a beautiful bronze wagon which depicts a typical Roma caravan. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union the Ukrainian Government invited the State of Israel to erect a monument. This was constructed in the form of a large menorah.

During our tour I informed our guide Ludmilla that in Vancouver I was involved with Holocaust education and wondered if there was such a thing in the Ukrainian school curriculum. Her response was adamant: there was very little being done. She explained that since Ukraine has moved toward the West and away from Moscow, the war in the Eastern Borderlands is causing Ukrainian authorities to accentuate nationalist leanings, especially in the youth population. Where nationalism is taught there is little enthusiasm to discuss past collaboration with the Nazis. Still, Kiev wants to attract tourist dollars and trade with countries such as Israel so there are some historical sites to attract the Jewish traveller. Babi Yar is one such site.

During the week that we were in Kiev a new president was sworn in. Volodymyr Zelensky is the first Ukrainian president with a Jewish background.

Babi Yar is possibly the most prominent site representing the Holocaust in the former Soviet Union. My father had six brothers and sisters alive in 1941 when the Nazi invasion took place. The majority were moved east with their families to Tashkent in Uzbekistan. A brother and a sister and their respective spouses were caught in a roundup of Jews in the city of Lugansk in Eastern Ukraine. They were murdered. For me, their bodily remains are in the ravine at Babi Yar. Their names, Monos Lieberman and Rosa Lieberman, have been inscribed for 25 years at the Holocaust Memorial in New Westminster.

Our visit to Kiev was eventful and emotional. My burly cousin Grisha embraced me at the airport on our departure and said, “Remember Lucien, you are my dear cousin and I am the son of Sam.”

Lucien Lieberman has a degree in chemical engineering, an MBA and worked for 30 years in investment banking. This background served him well as Treasurer for the VHEC, a role he performed from 1992 to 2010.
The Spies
BY IRENE N. WATTS

In 1940, during the Second World War, I was evacuated with my school from London, England to a small town in South Wales, to escape the bombing. After a long train journey we finally arrived at the town hall, and waited for strangers to look us over and choose their evacuees. The pretty youngest children were chosen first.

A year earlier, I had arrived in England by Kindertransport, a Jewish refugee with an unpronounceable name (Kirstein) from Berlin, Germany. These rescue trains saved almost ten thousand children from the Nazis.

Mr. and Mrs. Williams wanted a blonde four-year-old girl; however, they were persuaded to take me instead, even though I was almost nine and had straight, light-brown hair.

Aunty and Uncle, as I was asked to call my new foster parents, put me in the spare bedroom and seemed disappointed when I said I no longer needed a rubber sheet over the mattress.

There were no books or games in the house, Uncle Gwilym and Auntie Lillian had no children; I was bored most of the time, but they were kind to me. They introduced me to strange new foods like jelly and laverbread, which looks like seaweed but tastes deliciously of herring.

I learned the words of the Welsh national anthem and Auntie Lillian showed me off proudly to her friends. “This is Irene, our little evacuee,” she said and the ladies stared at me and whispered to each other in Welsh about the little foreigner.

One afternoon, dawdling on my way home from school, I noticed two rough-looking men, standing at the corner lamp post. They sounded very suspicious, and were talking in what I thought must be a foreign language. I understood the words “Hitler” and “invasion.”

The men wore heavy boots, white mufflers and cloth caps. They didn’t look at all like Uncle Gwilym, who wore a suit to work. Suppose they were spies? I immediately convinced myself that they were. Warnings about spies were everywhere. I had read the posters which said, “Walls have ears.”

I hurried to the bank where Uncle was Assistant Manager.

“Hello Bach (little one),” he said. “Shouldn’t you be at home having your tea?”

“Uncle,” I said, feeling very important, my imagination working overtime, “I overheard spies plotting, I saw them.”

He motioned me to be silent. “Not in front of the customers,” he said, and led me into a tiny office and shut the door. “Now then what’s all this about spies?”

“I heard some men talking about Hitler, and invaders landing on the coast. Of course I didn’t understand all the words.”

Uncle Gwilym said, “Can you show me where you saw them?”

“Yes,” I said. He held out his hand to me, and off we went down High Street.

“Over there,” I said. “I saw them standing near that lamp post. But they’ve gone now.” Uncle asked me if I’d recognize them again; I was sure I would. We walked around the small town, and at intervals I’d spot some innocent booted miners going home after their long shift down the coal mine. And I’d whisper, almost convinced, to Uncle, “that looks like them.”
I hadn’t enjoyed myself so much since I left London. Uncle Gwylim never doubted me for a minute.

“We’ll go to the police station and report,” he said. Inside the station a familiar poster reminded me that “Careless talk costs lives.” Wasn’t I doing just that? I was helping the war effort, I told myself.

Police Sergeant Jones, who was large, red-faced and kind said, “Now then Bach, don’t be frightened, I’m just going to take down the particulars.” I wasn’t in the least bit frightened. Actually, I was hoping he would take my fingerprints.

As the Sergeant asked me probing questions and carefully wrote down my answers, my story grew: the spies acquired exaggerated features and their conversation now included references to air raids, parachutes and secret meetings. By now I was deeply immersed in my drama and no longer sure what was truth and what was fiction.

No one asked me what language the spies spoke. The adults assumed, I suppose, that the men were speaking in German, a language I had almost forgotten in a year and a half of trying to turn myself into a proper English girl. I don’t think it occurred to Uncle and Sergeant Jones that the men were speaking in Welsh, as most people did in that small town in South Wales, inserting a few words of English here and there. It was those few words that I had overheard and understood, and magnified into a spy story.

“Dioch yn fawr.” Thank you very much, Irene. “Be sure and let your uncle know if there are any further developments.” The kindly Sergeant showed us out.

From time to time I’d mention that I thought I might have seen the men again, but I knew my moment of glory was over. I had not quite learned the difference between truth and fiction. No one ever mentioned the incident again.

Irene N. Watts was born in Berlin, raised in the UK and emigrated to Canada. She is the author of numerous books and plays for children and young people, among them Goodbye Marianne and No Pets Allowed. She lives in Vancouver.
GET WELL
Myer Grinshpan, Get well. Lillian Boraks-Nemetz
Felicia Folk, Get well. Ida Kaplan, Odie Kaplan
Karen Micner, Refuah shlema. Merle & Les Armes
Les Cohen, Get well. Al Szajman
Stella Mattuck, A full and speedy recovery. Julie Gutovich
Zmira Rosenthal, Refuah shlema. Art Toft
Ben Keil, Get well. Sylvie & Mark Epstein
Esther Weinstein, A full and speedy recovery. Julie Gutovich
Robert Keil, Refuah shlema. Deborah & Henry Ross-
Grayman, Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, The Child Survivor Group

SYMPATHY
Toni Wertman, On the loss of your father, George Wertman. Mark Hundert & Lynda Bayea, Hyla &
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Frieda Wertman & family, On the loss of your
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Sam, and Al Szajman, Deborah Snider & Eric Fielder,
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beloved mother, mother-in-law and grandmother. Les &
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MARCH 5, 2019 – DECEMBER 9, 2019
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Ilana Strummer, On your special birthday. Moshe & Shoshana Fidelman, Revi & Michael Ross
Rita Rolling, Happy Birthday. Shoshana Fidelman

THANK YOU

Mariette Duduk, In appreciation of your co-chairing the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust & Descendant’s Conference. Ron & Barb Krell
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Abe Grossman, Thank you. Ed Pascal
Roxanne Eichhorn, Thank you. Julie Gutovich
VHEC Board & Staff, Thank you. Julie Gutovich
Odie Kaplan, In appreciation. Ruth Wolochow, Eve Wolochow
Eddie Rozenberg, Thank you. Ruth Grunau
Robert Krell, In your honour. Julia Oversloot-Berg
Sharon Meen, In appreciation for your work on the VHEC’s “Treasured Belongings” exhibition. Chris Friednichs
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Everyone is Present is Terry's first work of creative non-fiction. The fact that the book has achieved dual award recognition is testament to Terry's ability to move between photographs and writing, to see how images and texts may be 'read' for insights about the world and about what it means to be human.

The richly satisfying essays are part memoir, part detective story, part investigative reportage, depicting her quest to unravel, through the few photos remaining, her family's epic journey across Europe as they flee Nazi occupation, country by country, and then through the Middle East to India, until they finally reach Cape Town, South Africa.

Terry Kurgan is an eminent South African artist and writer based in Johannesburg. Her innovative, often groundbreaking work has been described as having the unique capacity to combine high art with intimacy, tragedy and popular culture. She has exhibited and published widely in South Africa and internationally, and has received numerous fine art awards.

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Holocaust Education: New Strategies and Best Practices for the Classroom

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