

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

ZACHOR



SPRING 2023

AGE OF INFLUENCE:
YOUTH & NAZI PROPAGANDA

LETTERS FROM
ECKVILLE

CONSERVING A
BELOVED ARTEFACT

THE MULTIPLE LIVES OF GERDA
GOTTFRIED KRAUS'S NOTEBOOK

VANCOUVER
HOLOCAUST
EDUCATION
CENTRE

MONDAY
APRIL 17,
2023

7 PM | WOSK
AUDITORIUM

JEWISH
COMMUNITY
CENTRE
950 W. 41ST AVE.
VANCOUVER

YOM HASHOAH

HOLOCAUST COMMEMORATIVE EVENING



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Janos Benisz
Holocaust
Survivor

Wendy Bross Stuart
Music direction and
arrangements

Cantor Yaacov Orzech

Cantor Shani Cohen

Eric Wilson
Cellist

*Presented by the Vancouver Holocaust
Education Centre, the Jewish Community
Centre of Greater Vancouver and Temple
Sholom Synagogue Vancouver.*

*This program is funded through our
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Endowment Funds of the VHEC, the
Jewish Community Centre of Greater
Vancouver and Temple Sholom synagogue.*



 Jewish Community Centre
of Greater Vancouver



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SPRING 2023

ZACHOR

Zachor is the Hebrew
word for remember.

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Dear readers,

With the arrival of spring, the VHEC looks forward to welcoming visitors to our new exhibition, *Age of Influence: Youth & Nazi Propaganda*. Featuring propaganda from the VHEC's collection aimed at youth, this exhibition challenges viewers to look critically at the messages and techniques used by Nazi propagandists to influence young people. It provides student visitors a timely opportunity to exercise media literacy skills through an interactive tour and workshop.

Developed by our talented team and supported by the Al Roadburg Foundation, *Age of Influence* accompanies a remount of our signature exhibition, *In Focus: The Holocaust through the VHEC Collection*. Originally created by the VHEC and mounted in 2018, *In Focus* has been reimagined with a new selection of artefacts contributed by survivors, descendants and collectors in the community. Each artefact tells a unique story—whether of persecution, loss, resistance or survival—and humanizes themes of Holocaust study.

Community contributions and engagement in our work are evident throughout this issue. Joy Fai speaks to Robert Krell's decision to donate some 800 items from his personal library to the VHEC, and the volunteer work she is doing to ensure these invaluable books and periodicals are accessible to members and researchers. A dear friend and life fellow of the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society, Chris Friedrichs, contributes a personal piece about the fate of his grandfather's library, while historian Lauren Falkner Rossi reflects on the process of working with local survivor Mariette Doduck on her newly published memoir.

In May, the VHEC will welcome students to its first in-person Annual Symposium on the Holocaust since 2019. The 45th Annual Symposium will feature keynote speaker Hart Snider, whose contribution to this issue highlights the 1983 visit to Vancouver by students of Alberta teacher and Holocaust denier Jim Keegstra for the then 8th Annual Symposium. Featuring breakout sessions with the VHEC's dedicated survivor speakers, this year's program will invite participating students and teachers to be witnesses to eyewitnesses of the Holocaust, and reflect on the ongoing dangers of denial and distortion.

On behalf of the VHEC, my thanks to each one of you for joining us or renewing your commitment as a VHEC member. We look forward to welcoming you to our community-wide Yom HaShoah program on April 17, 2023. With Temple Sholom joining us as a new presenting partner and Janos Benisz as the featured survivor speaker, the evening promises to be a deeply meaningful opportunity for remembrance and reflection.

With best wishes for a happy and meaningful Passover,



Nina Krieger
Executive Director

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

AGE OF INFLUENCE: YOUTH & NAZI PROPAGANDA

EXHIBITION NOW ON VIEW

MONDAY - THURSDAY • 9 AM - 5 PM
FRIDAY • 9 AM - 3 PM

50-950 WEST 41ST AVENUE, VANCOUVER

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Age of Influence: Youth & Nazi Propaganda

BY LISE KIRCHNER

The VHEC maintains significant holdings of Nazi and antisemitic propaganda that bear witness to centuries of anti-Jewish hatred. Acquired through the generosity of local historians and collectors,¹ the propaganda in the VHEC collection promoted Nazi ideology and antisemitic stereotypes in Europe and North America from 1770 to the post-war period. Although the content is offensive, these primary sources serve as an important historical record of the “longest hatred.”



Left: Photograph of a girl wearing the uniform of the League of German Girls, ca. 1940. Donated by Peter N. Moogk. Item 2018.016.215. Right: German boys wearing Hitler Youth uniforms, 1933. Donated by Peter N. Moogk. Item 2018.016.219.

The study of propaganda is critical to Holocaust scholarship. Historic antisemitism reveals a cultural tradition in Europe that the Nazis were able to exploit in pursuit of their “Final Solution.” The stereotypes found in Nazi propaganda were hardly new; Nazi propaganda was built upon the same antisemitic rhetoric and tropes that had been repeated over centuries and across countries and continents. Viewed in this context, propaganda provides insight as to why the Nazis’ message met with little resistance from an audience familiar with the language and imagery of anti-Jewish hatred.

The study of propaganda is also important to our understanding of the use of a state’s authority to control targeted segments of its population. This dynamic is explored in the VHEC’s new exhibition, *Age of Influence: Youth & Nazi Propaganda*. Drawing upon diverse primary sources, *Age of Influence* examines the Nazis’ efforts to manipulate the experiences, attitudes and aspirations of German children and teens.

Many of the materials featured in this exhibition will be new to visitors, such as family photographs, Nazi youth magazines and anti-Roma youth fiction. Other artefacts will be instantly recognizable, like the infamous children’s books, *The Poisonous Mushroom*² and *Trust No Fox*,³ on display at the VHEC for the first time. *Age of Influence* is designed to encourage active engagement with these artefacts and images. Throughout the exhibition, questions prompt visitors to critically analyze materials on display and identify common techniques used to disseminate both positive and negative propaganda.

The exhibition’s storyline begins in the early 20th century when youth in Germany started defining themselves as a distinct socio-cultural group, attracting the attention of parties across the political spectrum. Popularized by youth-led groups like the *Wandervogel*, the German youth movement sought independence from adult authority and embraced communal and back-to-nature ideals. Their activities focused on hiking, survival

¹ Peter N. Moogk, Kit Krieger, Joseph Tan, Harrison & Hilary Brown and others.

² Ernst Hiemer, *Der Giftpilz* [The Poisonous Mushroom], (Nuremberg: Stürmeverlag, 1938).

³ Elvira Bauer, *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heide und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid* [Trust No Fox on his Green Heath and No Jew on his Oath], (Nuremberg: Der Stürmer Verlag, 1936).

VANCOUVER HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE

In Focus

The Holocaust through
the VHEC Collection



EXHIBITION
NOW ON VIEW

MONDAY TO THURSDAY · 9 AM – 5 PM
FRIDAY · 9 AM – 3 PM

(604) 264-0499 | VHEC.ORG | 50-950 WEST 41ST AVE VANCOUVER

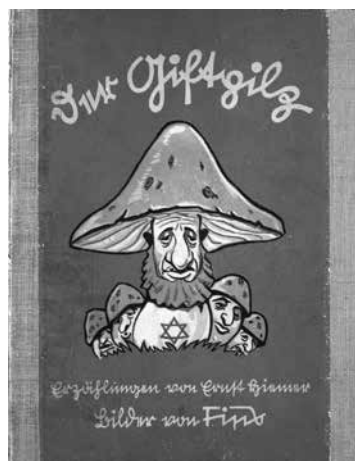
EXHIBITION SUPPORTED BY THE MARSID FAMILY FOUNDATION
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skills and group pursuits in nature. Against this backdrop, the Nazi party emerged and cast itself as the future-facing “movement of youth.” With its Hitler Youth organization, the Nazi party tapped into the German youth movement and set its sights on this demographic to shape the future of a “racially pure” and physically fit national community.

Age of Influence examines how the Hitler Youth became the regime’s most effective tool to indoctrinate children and teens in Nazi ideology. It offered German youth a powerful group identity and appealed to adolescent yearnings such as the desire to belong, the quest for action and adventure, a sense of purpose and independence from parents. With separate organizations for boys and girls, the Hitler Youth glorified gender roles. Boys were prepared for military and leadership responsibilities while girls were groomed to become wives, mothers and caregivers for the nation.



June 1934 issue of *Der Aufbruch*, a Hitler Youth magazine. Donated by Joseph Tan. Item 2008.007.001.



Der Giftpilz and *Trau keinem Fuchs auf grüner Heid und keinem Jud auf seinem Eid* were two antisemitic children's books used for indoctrinating children. The illustrated stories and lessons presented common stereotypes about the "dangers" of Jews. Acquired with support from Kit Krieger.



of hostility and indifference toward their treatment. *Age of Influence* depicts this process with reference to artefacts such as children's books and instructional posters used in German schools.

Contextualizing Nazi propaganda within a broad historical framework is essential. For this reason, *Age of Influence* has been mounted in conjunction with *In Focus: The Holocaust through the VHEC Collection*. *In Focus* presents a

An array of Nazi youth magazines from 1934 to 1943 are featured in *Age of Influence*, as well as family photographs, collectible cigarette cards, video clips and Hitler Youth paraphernalia. Visitors can browse the pages of Nazi youth magazines to discover for themselves the eye-catching fonts, unique graphics and captivating images which were carefully designed to attract young audiences. At its height, the Nazi youth press published 57 different magazine titles for children.

While participation in the Hitler Youth was compulsory for most children, Jewish youths were banned from membership. Their experience is given voice in the exhibition by local survivors. In video testimony clips, Serge Vanry, Jannushka Jakoubovitch and Judith Elliot describe their feelings of fear, shame and rejection as Jewish children confronted with pervasive antisemitic propaganda and excluded from the activities of their non-Jewish peers.

Perhaps the best-known propaganda tactic used by the Nazis was the creation of common enemies. Antisemitism and racism were key educational goals in the Nazi German school system, where students were taught that the health of the German nation was threatened by "inferior" groups like the Jews, Roma and individuals with disabilities. By demonizing and scapegoating these groups, the Nazis created a climate

thematic history of the Holocaust, illustrated by artefacts donated to the VHEC by local survivors and collectors. A curated selection of antisemitica in this exhibition conveys the long-held perceptions and representations of Jews through time.

This history is also important as we navigate escalating antisemitism and racism around the globe and in Canada, where reports of antisemitic incidents have reached record levels. The use of digital media has amplified hate, and the ease with which disinformation can be spread on social media platforms perpetuates Holocaust distortion and denial. In this milieu, it is imperative to equip students with the media literacy skills required to critically evaluate information they encounter. *Age of Influence* will assist educators to promote key curricular objectives such as digital literacy, critical thinking and social responsibility. ■

Lise Kirchner has worked with the VHEC since 1999 in the development and delivery of its educational programs. Lise was part of the exhibition team that developed *Age of Influence: Youth & Nazi Propaganda*, along with Tessa Coutu, Franziska Schurr and Illene Yu.

Age of Influence: Youth & Nazi Propaganda and *In Focus: The Holocaust through the VHEC Collection* will be on view to the public beginning March 15, 2023. Docent-led tours for school groups can be booked online at www.vhec.org/school-programs/exhibition-tours.



Alex Buckman presenting at the Shawnigan Lake School symposium on the Holocaust, January 2023. Photographed by Arden Gill.

A RETURN TO DISTRICT SYMPOSIA

The VHEC has resumed our much-anticipated in-person symposia on the Holocaust. So far this season, more than 1,900 students and teachers have attended four symposia in public and private schools. Historians Dr. Sebastian Huebel, Kit Krieger and Dr. Lauren Faulkner Rossi provided context and participated in panel discussions, together with survivor speakers Lillian Boraks-Nemetz, Alex Buckman and Peter Suedfeld. Additional symposia are planned for the remainder of the 2022–23 academic year.

NEW DOCENTS AND TRAINING

In anticipation of upcoming school tours and workshops, VHEC staff took time to reflect on our approach to docent training. We introduced an expanded training program, grounded in best practices, that supports docents in three main areas: anti-racism and diversity, inquiry-based learning and trauma-informed education. More than 12 new docents recently joined our team, reflecting a diversity of backgrounds, ages and experiences. The following quotes offer a taste of what motivates our docents:

“The work of the VHEC is more important than ever, given the current political and social climate in this country. Education is our most important tool in combating antisemitism and racism. I wish to be a part of this endeavour.”

“I believe that failing to pay attention to our past condemns us to repeat it. Education is the only way to truly ensure humanity continues to evolve, and I want to try to help that process.”

INTRODUCING THE DOCENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

In support of the VHEC’s school program, the education team is working closely with our new Docent Advisory Committee. The committee is composed of Helen Heacock-Rivers and Anita Willson, both experienced VHEC docents who have already contributed valuable insights into the planning and development of our new training program. The following quotes from Helen and Anita explain their goals for participating on this committee.

“I want to ensure all those involved in Holocaust antiracism education have the tools to deliver world-class materials and have opportunities to connect with, and learn from, docents, educators, administrators and survivors.” —Helen Heacock-Rivers

“I think the VHEC is a remarkable organization, and our programs and tours are excellent, as is our docent team. However, I think that together our docent group can come up with ways to further enhance our touring skills.” —Anita Willson

A warm thank you to all our docents and advisors for your time, expertise and service.

Letters from Eckville

BY HART SNIDER



Hart Snider, age 9.

When I was nine years old and away at Jewish summer camp for the first time, I took part in a “day of fun and fellowship” with some visiting teenagers from nearby Eckville, Alberta. They’d been former students of James “Jim” Keegstra, the social studies teacher who was fired for ignoring instructions from the school board to stop teaching antisemitic conspiracy theories and Holocaust denial in his classroom.

Back in early 1983, tiny Eckville—with a population of about 900, and where Jim Keegstra was still serving as mayor—was the focus of massive national media exposure. It seemed like the whole country was interested in Keegstra’s ex-students, and what they believed after being indoctrinated with so much antisemitism. Students were interviewed in newspapers and magazines, and a CBC documentary entitled *Lessons in Hate* was seen by over a million Canadians.

For over a decade, Keegstra’s students were either influenced by his teaching, or had to convincingly pretend that they were, if they wanted to pass his social studies class. An essay by one student actually read: “We

must get rid of every living Jew so that we can live in peace and freedom.”¹ Keegstra gave it a passing grade.

Around the same time that members of my community in Edmonton were working out a plan to connect with students from Eckville to dispel some of the antisemitic ideas they’d been taught. Vancouver’s Estelle Jacobson and her husband Michael (president of the local B’nai B’rith Maccabee Lodge of BC) were working to bring a group of them to town to attend the Eighth Annual Symposium on the Holocaust. They selected six of Keegstra’s former students who were about to graduate out of the school system.

On the morning of May 25, 1983, the Eckville delegation took an early flight to Vancouver. One student described the city as “very green and luscious with vegetation.” They visited Queen Elizabeth Park, went shopping on Granville Street, toured the Aquarium, visited Temple Shalom Synagogue, and “came upon a nudist beach at the Museum of Anthropology, which came as a real shock.” Lorna Tink, their teacher, called it “a living lesson in human anatomy,” but considered her visit to Temple Shalom Synagogue as her personal highlight of the tour.

The next day, the students were part of an audience for a two-day symposium on the Holocaust organized by the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society. CBC news reported that the Eckville students were just “anonymous faces in a crowd,” that “they wanted to learn the Holocaust story, but did not want to be singled out or ridiculed just because they were students of Jim Keegstra.” They heard survivors like Vera Slyomovics talk about being forced to march to Auschwitz when she was 17 years old, the same age as the visiting students. It had an immediate impact. One student wrote, “the most impressive thing I experienced was the talks with the survivors. I will never forget these people.”

¹ Quote from the *Calgary Herald* reproduced in *A Trust Betrayed* by David Bercuson and Douglas Wertheimer, page 62.

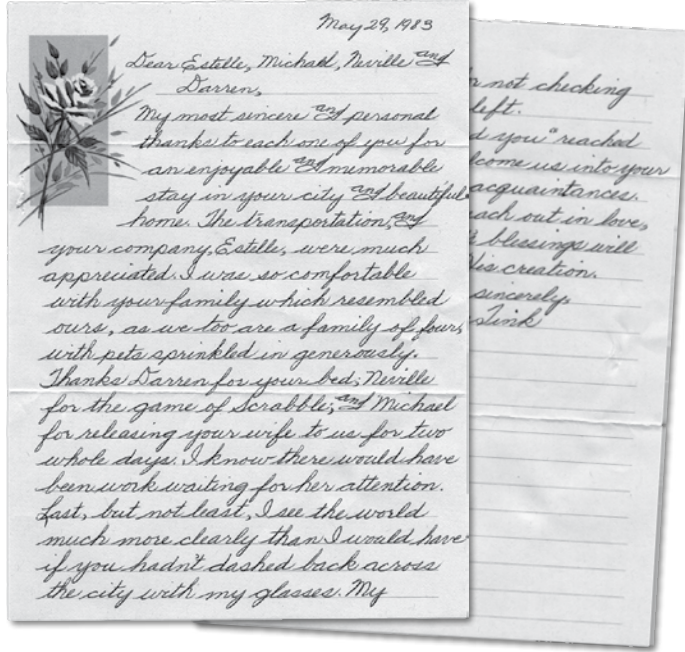
Considering everything Keegstra taught them, it's hard to understand what hearing from a Holocaust survivor, or stepping into a synagogue for the first time, must have been like for the teens, none of whom had ever even met a Jewish person before. Significantly, each student stayed with a Jewish host family while in Vancouver. Lorna Tink wrote in her thank-you letter that, "It's too easy to forget that human relationships are a 'two-way' street. Our students were certainly nervous, yes, even courageous, but in every instance, they reported that they had enjoyed their evening with their host family." She continued, "Although I am sincerely sorry for the circumstances which [precipitated] this trip, I cannot regret that [we] re-experienced the fact that knowledge, based on mutual concern and understanding, is basic to any degree of acceptance and peace."

What I find so interesting is that they weren't scared to meet Jewish people; they were more worried about what their hosts would think of them. In a media interview after the symposium, one student said that "Eckville has a reputation of being prejudiced against Jews, but it's not, it's just that Mr. Keegstra had his opinion and he voiced it, and I think Eckville got that same reputation." Another student wrote about the experience of staying with a Vancouver Jewish family, and how nice it was to have been "greeted very kindly... treated like people, and not like bigots or freaks."

Michael Jacobson told the *Vancouver Sun* that he hoped this trip would come to influence the people of Eckville's views on the Holocaust, but his letter acknowledged the difficulty of the task: "Unfortunately, one cannot undo in



Eckville students at Prospect Point, 1983. Item 1996.057.002, donated by Estelle Jacobson in 1984.



Thank-you letter from Lorna Tink, 1983. Donated by Estelle Jacobson in 1984.

one day what Mr. Keegstra spent 13 years doing and these students still harbour misconceptions about Jews... B'nai B'rith, Edmonton, have been working closely with the Eckville community and are continuing with their efforts. Hopefully, this bigotry will come to an end."

The story of these students, even all these years later, still shocks me. How they were lied to and robbed of a proper education. How they were pushed into the media spotlight. And how scared I'd been to meet them as a kid. In my graphic novel and animated film, both called *The Basketball Game*, I portray the students as tough-looking villains, and after hearing an antisemitic comment from one of them, my worst fears are realized, and I imagine them transforming into a Nazi, skinhead, and Klansman.

But what I eventually understood was that none of this was their fault. It was their teacher's fault all of this had happened. And simply hanging out together and playing a game of basketball like regular kids can help dispel fear and prejudice.

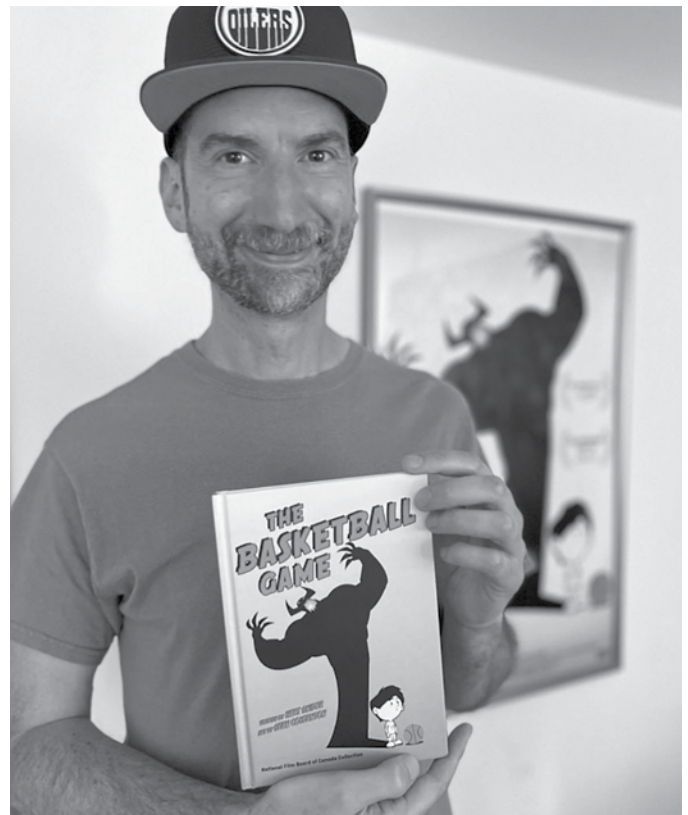
When I'm discussing *The Basketball Game*, I always tell people that the story is from my point of view because

I wasn't sure how the Eckville students really felt. After forty years of wondering, thanks to the VHEC's archives, I am finally hearing from those students in their own words. In reading their letters, I find solace in the fact that the openness and kindness of the Canadian Jewish community helped them to learn and feel welcome.

Despite everything, these students showed up to discover the truth, which took a lot of courage. As I continue to tell this story, how communities impacted by hate were able to work together to heal wounds and change worldviews, I'm glad to now be able to include more from their perspective. ■

Hart Snider is the creator of *The Basketball Game*, an animated film and graphic novel. The film is streaming on the National Film Board of Canada's website (NFB.ca) and on the NFB app. The graphic novel from Firefly Books is in stores now.

Hart Snider will speak about impact of the Eckville student visit to Vancouver at the 45th Annual Symposium on the Holocaust in May 2023, attended by 500 high school students and their teachers.



Child of Silence: Mariette's Story

BY LAUREN FAULKNER ROSSI

"I don't know how that child did it," Marie said to me one afternoon in the summer of 2020. She was talking about herself, in a rare moment of using the third person. Then known as Mariette, she was five years old when the German armies invaded her homeland of Belgium. She was ten when they were finally defeated and twelve when she immigrated to Canada. She doesn't remember her father, and has some vivid memories of her mother, from whom she was separated initially in 1941 and permanently in 1943 when her mother was killed in Auschwitz. She survived by hiding, moving from place to place, usually at the direction of an older sibling involved in organized resistance to Nazism. Her brother specifically instructed her, when she was first moved to hide with a Christian family in 1941, not to learn anyone's name, not to make friends with anyone and to never change her name.

Marie first consented to be interviewed about her experience in 1984, by scholars at the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society for its Holocaust Documentation Project. This two-hour videotaped interview was the first time she spoke publicly—that is, not to a member of her family—about her

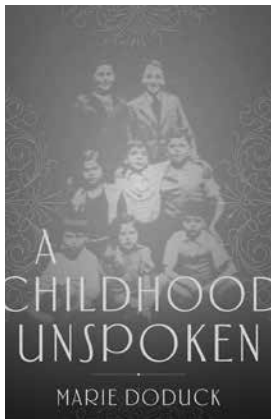
childhood in Europe. She gave another videotaped interview to the VHEC in 2010. In these recordings, she sometimes speaks factually, recalling her childhood in pre-war Brussels, where she was born in 1935. She was the youngest of eleven siblings. At other times, she struggles: she cannot say how her father died; she remembers very little about the orphanages and convents and the nuns who helped to hide her; she cannot remember much at all between 1945 and 1947, when she was in Belgium. And some memories are clearly very painful, even if fragmentary, partial, or inaccurate: notably, the last time she saw her mother, on a street corner in Brussels, when her mother and an older brother were picked up by the Gestapo. They were interned briefly at a transit camp in Mechelen, Belgium, before being taken to Auschwitz. For decades, she believed the arrest happened on her birthday, May 10, 1942, which she refused to celebrate.

I have heard Marie speak a few times, to audiences of Vancouver-area high school students, and each time she struggled with the emotion attached to this particular memory. She was always poised and dignified, confident and calm, so this break in her veneer of control was arresting for an audience to witness. You could hear a pin drop in the gymnasium each time she described her horror at that scene. It wasn't until much later, after I knew her well enough to call her a friend, that I realized how involuntary, and unwelcome, this emotion was. Each time she remembered her mother and brother's arrest, she relived it with all its vivid trauma.

When I asked her to consider writing her memoir, and then agreed to help her with the project, I had no conception of how difficult it would be for both of us, for different reasons: for her, to relive in great detail a period of her life that she had tried to forget; and for me, to suspend the temptation to make order of her memories instead of simply listening, actively and empathetically.



Marie Doduck and Lauren Faulkner Rossi at *A Childhood Unspoken* book launch. Photographed by Josias Tschanz.



Nor did I have any inkling of how immensely rewarding our collaboration would become, and the friendship which would grow from it.

Mariette's memories are both detailed and confounding, the silences rich in meaning but also frustratingly ambiguous and unpredictable. Her

experience of the Holocaust shaped her as a child and continues to shape who she is today. What she remembers from eighty years ago is often astounding: some of the scenes are as detailed as if they happened yesterday. She listened well to her older brother Jean when he told her not to remember names. She cannot remember the cities she passed through (save for the Belgian cities that she knew, and Paris, where her oldest sister lived before the war), or any messages, or the logistics of how she got from place to place. She can remember travelling "by train, by bus, by motorbike in a side car, and on foot," and sometimes being with another older brother, Henri, who taught her to jump from moving trains and fall without hurting herself.

This is how her memories work: they come in flashes, like snapshots or fragments, only rarely connected to each other. During one of our conversations, she told me: "You know how a child will scrape the wall when they're bored and there's nothing to do? That wall is like memory. You scratch, it gets deeper and deeper and deeper, and you find things that you didn't know were there." She didn't always know how to process her memories, or how to arrange them in sequence. Many of them drifted inchoately, like photos without captions, until we started working on this memoir. Marie recognizes the gaps in her story; some will never be resolved. Despite them, she never flagged in her determination to finish her memoirs.

She is anxious to share "her truth," even if she cannot always make it fit properly with "the truth."

I have been struck from the beginning by the uniqueness of Marie's story of survival, first of the Holocaust and then coming to Canada, facing renewed discrimination and hardship. Eyewitness testimony, particularly that of survivors, is an essential component to writing the history of any genocide. Such evidence has historically been met with reluctance due to its highly subjective, sometimes inaccurate, and therefore unreliable nature. But as historian Omer Bartov writes, "So much of what actually occurs [during a genocide], as well as how such occurrences are experienced, [has been] entirely missing from the official documentation."¹

By writing voices like Mariette's into the historical narrative, we are able to "observe a world far removed and different from our own through a unique personal prism, thereby enabling us to understand how people not much unlike ourselves responded to mass violence and destruction."² Marie, as an adult, has long pursued this goal. I am honoured that she has chosen to work with me to ensure that the lessons offered by her life experiences reach a larger audience. I am thrilled to celebrate the release of her memoir, available from the Azrieli Foundation. Her truth is now on record for her children, her grandchildren and great-grandchildren (who were very much front of mind during our work), and for everyone who picks up the book and dares to become her witness. ■

Lauren Faulkner Rossi completed her PhD at Brown University. She has taught history at the University of Notre Dame and currently is an assistant professor at Simon Fraser University.

Mariette Doduck's memoir, *A Childhood Unspoken* (2023), will be given to school groups visiting the VHEC courtesy of the Azrieli Foundation. For more information, visit memoirs.azrielifoundation.org/titles/a-childhood-unspoken/.

¹ Omer Bartov, editor, *Voices on War and Genocide* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2020), 5. See also Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2018).

² Omer Bartov, editor, *Voices on War and Genocide*, 7.

PROGRAM NEWS

ENGAGING DESCENDANTS OF THE HOLOCAUST

Descendants of Holocaust Survivors:

Sharing our Voices

This winter, the VHEC partnered with Jewish Family Services of Greater Vancouver for a six-week online workshop entitled **Descendants of Holocaust Survivors: Sharing our Voices**. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Abby Wener Herlin and Claire Sicherman, both members of the third generation. Abby and Claire provided a creative and supportive opportunity for descendants to explore their identities in writing. They used mindfulness and somatic exercises to connect and ground participants in a reflexive and centred writing practice. Each week, participants engaged in prompt-based exercises to tell their distinct stories.



Claire Sicherman and Dr. Abby Wener Herlin.

Stepping Up: Telling the Story

Coming this fall is **Stepping Up: Telling the Story**, an online workshop facilitated by Rachel Mines. Participants will learn hands-on strategies to interview survivors and/or other family members, research their family history online, organize material into a short biography and practice presenting their work to other workshop participants. Rachel Mines is the daughter of Holocaust survivors. She coordinated and taught *Writing Lives: The Holocaust Survivor Memoir Project*, in which Langara College students interviewed local survivors and helped them write their memoirs. More information and registration details will be announced soon.



Rachel Mines.

HOSTING COMMEMORATIVE PROGRAMS

International Holocaust Remembrance Day

January 27 is designated by the United Nations General Assembly as International Holocaust Remembrance Day, to mark the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and honour the six million Jewish victims of the Holocaust, as well as the millions of other victims including Jehovah Witnesses, the Roma, people with disabilities, Black people and LGBTQ people. IHRD is an important opportunity for the VHEC to share its commitment to educate against antisemitism, racism, and hatred of all forms.

This past January, the VHEC partnered on IHRD programs at Vancouver City Hall and the Bayit Synagogue in Richmond and joined a Shabbat dinner at the UBC Hillel House. Also at UBC, Nina Krieger and Dr. Abby Wener Herlin spoke as part of a talk organized in partnership with the Faculty of Medicine, Respectful Environments, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion. This online event featured historian and professor Chris Friedrichs and Holocaust survivor speaker Dr. Robert Krell and is available for streaming on vhec.org/events/events-gallery/.



From left: Amalia Boe-Fishman, Mariette Doduck, Dr. Peter Suedfeld.

Yom HaShoah

On the 80th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, this year's Yom HaShoah commemorative program will feature Janos Benisz, a concentration camp survivor born in Hungary. For Janos, being a Holocaust survivor speaker keeps him young. He believes it is essential for audiences to witness his experiences, so they can carry the memory with them and use it to combat Holocaust distortion and denial. A highlight of this program is hearing traditional Yiddish and Hebrew songs, like "Am Ysrael Chai" and the "Partisan Song," performed by vocalists and a cellist led by musical director Wendy Bross Stuart. Past Yom HaShoah performer Keren Ketz recalls: "To this day, I have never felt more in touch with my Jewish heritage than I did when I was singing on stage in front of Holocaust survivors... My experience at Yom HaShoah is a reminder of how the Jewish spirit flourishes even in the face of unimaginable evil."



Janos Benisz. Photographed by Rhonda Dent.

The Next Chapter: Behind a Significant Donation to the VHEC Library

BY JOY FAI

One of my favourite things to do is to buy a new book, especially one hot off the press. I love to crack it open and smell it. Check out the font. Read the introduction, scan the index. Then, I settle into reading it: learning something new, identifying with a character, being transported into another world. How then does one say goodbye to a book? To let go of the memories that go along with it? How does one understand the experience of donating books collected over a lifetime? This article is a glimpse into Dr. Robert Krell's historic donation of a selection of titles, from his personal Holocaust and Judaica library, to the VHEC in June 2022.

While there are many books in Robert's home, it is not until you get downstairs that you begin to understand the profound richness of his library. There, you will walk into a room with walls lined from floor to ceiling with books. The length of one wall is dedicated to books about the Holocaust, in alphabetical order by author. Another wall holds manuscripts, journals, newspaper articles and books about Judaism and Israel, with a dedicated section for Elie Wiesel and Sir Martin Gilbert. Stacked on another wall are his joke books!

Back in 2019, Robert made a pragmatic decision. He was getting older. He recognized the value of his library and wanted to secure the safety and usefulness of it. Robert felt the books deserved a far wider audience than just himself. They deserved to be read, used for research and available to students and a general public wanting to learn more about the Holocaust. So, over a year ago, we sent a list of titles in his library to Shannon LaBelle, the VHEC's librarian, to see if the VHEC wanted any of them. When we received the list back, she initially noted over 350 items of interest. We were all surprised at the number, as the VHEC already had a substantial library of Holocaust-related publications.

Over the next weeks and months—and COVID-related delays—we worked on pulling the VHEC's selection together. I felt honoured to help with this project and had no idea of the depth of experience it would bring into my life. As we gathered the books, Robert lovingly and gently opened each one. He peeled off old price tags, inserted a name tag and considered if he really was ready to let it go. Occasional phrases in the books had been highlighted. A few, underlined, noting important facts he wanted to remember. Most were in very good condition. Many were referred to over the years in preparation for keynote addresses or published articles. Memories flooded Robert. He discovered a few books he wanted to keep a little bit longer. Each one had a story.



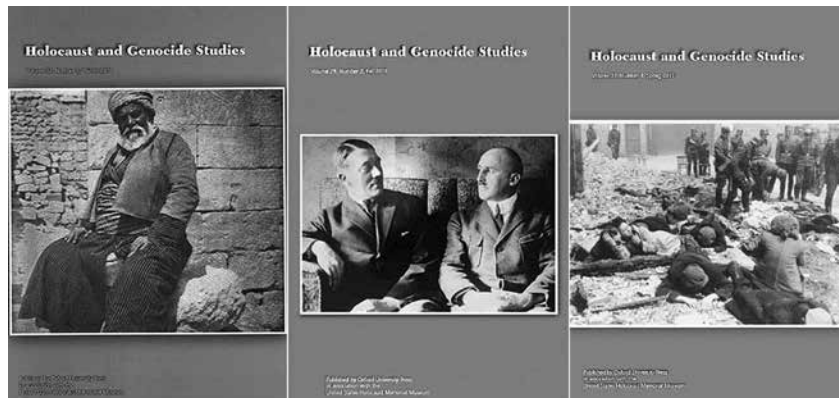
Shyla Seller and Robert Krell, June 2, 2022.

For example, Robert shared the significance of David Boder's *I Did Not Interview the Dead*. Boder, a psychologist, audiotaped interviews with camp survivors in 1947. He interviewed a teenager, Abe Mohnblum, who told him that psychologists knew nothing yet (given what he had experienced and seen). Decades later, at Elie Wiesel's 80th birthday celebration, Robert remembers talking with Alan Rosen, who had written a book about Boder's interviews. When Robert mentioned quoting Mohnblum in an article, Rosen said he knew him and that he lives in Tel Aviv. So many connections!

Among the most important of the donated publications is his run of *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, a journal published by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* publishes scholarly articles, many examining historical documents produced by perpetrators. Read them and weep.

Some of the books are first editions. Many are inscribed by the authors, thanking Robert for his encouragement—his deep understanding—being a survivor himself. Some may have never been written without his prodding and encouragement. We would talk about the years some of the books were written. How could several have been published in the midst of the Shoah? What happened to these authors? It took us months to box them all up. It felt as though we needed to do justice to each one.

There were several Dutch books and many of Elie Wiesel's. Some of them are truly historic, such as Rudolf Vrba's powerful and informative *I Escaped from Auschwitz*, by our very own Vancouver whistleblower and hero. Nineteen boxes were delivered to the VHEC in the first delivery, and more were delivered after Shannon LaBelle and Shyla Seller, Director of Collections, had the chance to visit his home and review more publications, child survivor newsletters, journals and memorabilia that had not been included on the original list. Shyla received the first delivery on June 2, 2022. While I believe Robert felt



relieved and happy, knowing that these books are now a part of the Centre's library, I sensed a tinge of sadness that day. These books symbolize to me a lifetime of work and dedication to Holocaust remembrance and education.

As a result of this experience, I recognized an opportunity to realize a goal of mine, to volunteer at the VHEC. I now assist the library in cataloguing Robert's donation of books. My time there has only enhanced my deep love for reading. I encourage you to visit the VHEC and peruse some of these titles. At last count, Robert has donated over 800 items, including books, periodicals, DVDs and educational resources. They are actively being processed and can be found in the collections catalogue here: collections.vhec.org/Search/library/search/robert+krell+2022.

Robert Krell is the founding president of the VHEC, and as he enters his 83rd year, this incredible donation demonstrates his continuing support for the work they do. This donation will help to ensure that future generations will have access to books written not only about the Shoah but also during the Shoah.

With each book lies a story. This is my story of the donation of these books to the VHEC. Although the Centre is only a few blocks away from Robert's home, it really is a dramatic change. A change Robert welcomed doing at last. ■

Joy Fai is a research assistant to Dr. Robert Krell. She lives in Vancouver, BC.

The Library of Émile Bruell

BY CHRIS FRIEDRICH

My grandfather, Émile Bruell, was born to a Jewish family in Lichtenfels, Bavaria, in 1870. At a young age, he moved to France to work in his cousins' silk firm. He became passionately enamoured of France and spent the rest of his life living in Lyon. By his middle years, he himself became the head of a silk company there.

From time to time, my grandfather travelled to Germany to visit his family. On one of those trips he met my grandmother, Ella Herxheimer. After a whirlwind courtship, he proposed to Ella, married her, and brought her to Lyon. Their only child, my mother Nellie, was born in Lyon in 1908. My grandparents' marriage was not a success; after a few years, my grandmother moved back to Germany with Nellie. In 1913, my grandparents received a decree of divorce from the civil tribunal in Lyon.

During the First World War, all travel between Germany and France was of course impossible. Following the war, however, Émile could resume visiting his family in Germany. On one of those visits, in 1920, my mother was able to spend a few days with her father, and thereafter she saw him about once a year.

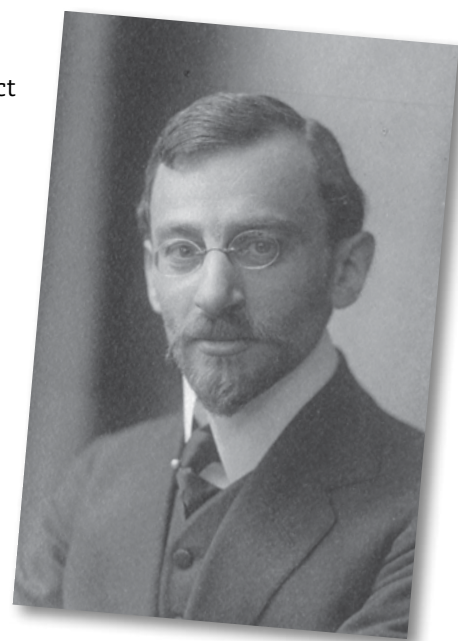
By the 1930s my mother was visiting France regularly, and always included some time in Lyon to see her father. By then Émile was remarried, to a Catholic woman from a very modest background who may have previously been his housekeeper. My mother always described her father's second wife as a good-natured but rather uneducated woman.

My grandfather, by contrast, was a superbly self-educated man with a passionate love of French and English literature. He was also a bibliophile, with a splendid library of hundreds of beautifully bound books. Each book displayed his personal bookplate. There were two slightly different versions of the bookplate, but each had the same image and the words: Ex Libris E. Bruell.

My grandfather loved showing my mother his library and discussing books with her. More than once, he mentioned vaguely that someday all these books would be hers. She was his only child, after all, and his wife was not interested in books. In 1935, he gave her a beautiful edition of the famous romantic tale *Paul et Virginie* by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. The front endpaper already had his bookplate, but on the next blank page he pasted in the second version of the bookplate, to which he added an inscription to my mother. On another occasion, he gave her an edition of the *Lettres choisies de Madame de Sévigné*, for which he had commissioned a special cover box with my mother's initials.

In 1937, my mother and my father emigrated from Germany to the United States. Before going to New York, my mother paid another visit to her father in Lyon. Two years later, the war began, and in 1940 the German army invaded France. By the end of 1941, the United States was at war with Germany, and communication between my mother and her father in occupied France soon became impossible.

After France was liberated in 1944, contact was possible again. As soon as she could, my mother wrote to her father. She received a response from her stepmother with the news that Émile had become ill during the war and died in a sanatorium outside of Lyon. Other relatives told us that, in



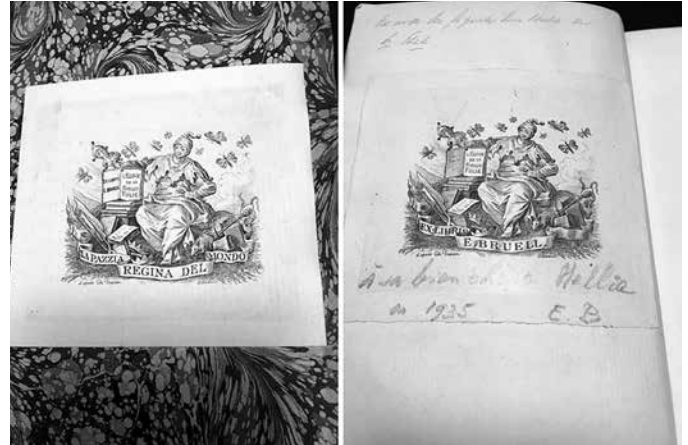
Émile Bruell, 1907.

increasing desperation over what he faced as a Jew in Vichy France, my grandfather had finally taken his own life. When I was in Lyon in the 1990s, I inspected the death registers of the 6th arrondissement of Lyon, which recorded that Émile had died on January 8, 1944, but no cause of death was indicated.

At some point after receiving the news of his death, my mother asked her stepmother what had happened to her father's magnificent collection of cherished books. Her stepmother replied with a remarkable story: Émile had become so depressed about the prospect that the Nazis would end up with his beautiful collection that he hired some men with wheelbarrows to accompany him, with all his books, to a bridge over one of the two rivers of Lyon, where they proceeded to dump his entire collection into the river.

It was difficult to believe this story. One could not help but suspect that Émile's widow had concocted this tale because she was embarrassed to admit the more plausible truth: that she had sold the entire collection after Émile's death. This would, in fact, have been quite understandable. Even though she herself was not Jewish, as the widow of a Jew in occupied France, her position may well have been a precarious one. My mother chose not to challenge the story, so she did not pursue the matter. She cherished the few books her father had given her. My mother died in 1994, and I now own her copy of *Paul et Virginie*.

Over the years, my siblings and I continued to wonder if the story about my grandfather dumping his whole collection of books into the river was true. In 2008, we got the unsurprising answer. An antiquarian book dealer in Paris contacted my brother Martin. The book dealer had available for sale a beautifully bound rare book which included a bookplate with the words: "Ex Libris E. Bruell." An internet search for "E. Bruell" had quickly led the book dealer to the family history website that my brother maintained. The book dealer attached a photo of the bookplate to his email, and asked whether my brother might like to purchase this book that



The two bookplates in Émile Bruell's copy of *Paul et Virginie*.

may once have belonged to his grandfather. The price requested was 300 euros.

My brother forwarded the message to me. I could quickly confirm that this was, in fact, our grandfather's bookplate. Still, we were disinclined to pay a few hundred euros to purchase a book which, if history had unfolded differently, should and would have belonged to our family. In the years that followed a few internet searches revealed almost a dozen other rare books, with the "E. Bruell" bookplate, being offered for sale by various antiquarian bookdealers in France. Prices of a few hundred euros were the norm.

There was no legal issue. Under French law, my grandfather's widow would have been his heir, and she had the legal right to sell the books she had inherited. In the difficult circumstances of 1944 or 1945, she probably only got a few francs for each of these books which, sixty years later, were commanding prices in the hundreds of euros. My grandfather himself and his beautiful library had been just two more casualties of the murderous cataclysm that engulfed Europe in the 1940s. ■

Chris Friedrichs is Professor Emeritus of History at the University of British Columbia. He is a specialist in German history and has been active for decades in Holocaust awareness programs under the auspices of the VHEC.

COLLECTIONS NEWS

CATALOGUING AND ACCESS UPDATE

With help from project archivists Chase Nelson and Amanda Alster, the VHEC has added a number of collections, old and new, to its online catalogue. These additions include: the Eckville student visit collection (with thanks to Estelle Jacobson); the Frances Hoyd fonds; the Leonore Freiman fonds (with thanks to Debby Freiman), the Eisler, Galperin family collection (with thanks to George Eisler and Yotam Ronen); the Paula Kirman collection and the Leon and Esther Kaufman fonds (with thanks to Lylane Thal and Ryan Cheuk Him Sun). The descriptions of these collections are now available for online reference and research in collections.vhec.org. They describe diaries, photographs, ephemera and more—the documentary residue of the lives of Jewish Holocaust survivors who immigrated to Vancouver, BC, and rebuilt their lives.

This work was funded in part by the Library and Archives Canada Documentary Heritage Communities Program. The VHEC is grateful to be the recipient of funding in 2021 and 2022 for our Enhanced Cataloguing and Access Project, which allowed us to successfully migrate over 1,000 catalogue records—previously only accessible in-house via our FileMaker Pro database—into our publicly available collections catalogue. As part of this project, the VHEC catalogued and created time-coded summaries for five of its most recent Holocaust testimonies, including that of Hungarian child survivor, Ilona Mermelstein, recorded in 2020. For more information, please contact collections@vhec.org.



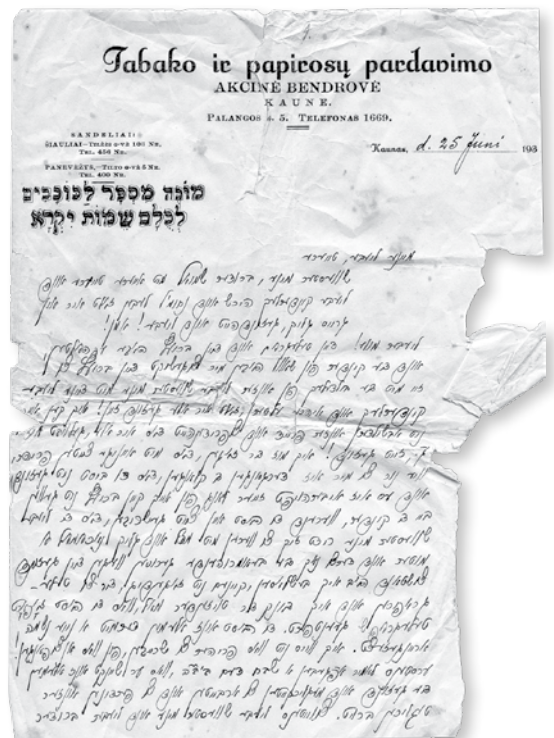
Leonore Freiman, circa 1940, donated by Debby Freiman. Item 2021.037.092.



1- and 2-mark scrips from Buchenwald Außenkommando, donated by Frances Hoyd. Items 1993.023.002 and 1993.023.003.



Ruins of Warsaw Ghetto postcard, donated by Paula Kirman. Item 93.07.0128.



Letter to a loved one, acquired by the VHCS from George Eisler circa 1993. Item 1993.010.002.

CONSERVING A BELOVED ARTEFACT

This child's shoe, recovered from the Kanada barracks at Auschwitz-Birkenau, has been used by the VHEC in several past exhibitions to represent the loss of life and experience of children during the Holocaust. The shoe is a favourite of docents and visitors alike. In 2017, we noticed that bits of leather were flaking off the artefact in storage and so we reached out to the Canadian Conservation Institute (CCI) for help. The CCI provides conservation treatments for selected objects that either have significant historical and cultural value or are challenging and require explorations into conservation treatment and science. As part of their analytical and conservation work, we learned that the item is a child-sized left ankle boot made from brown leather, consistent with a derby/blucher styling, and likely had a raised heel block. The leather, and partially visible textile lining, is soiled. It has stiffened into its current flattened form, causing warping and strain on the remaining intact stitching. The sole is detached from the upper, its 6.5 remaining metal eyelets are corroded.



Item 1997.009.001, donated to the VHEC by Yacov Handeli.

Conservator Lauren Osmond analysed the artefact and prepared a treatment plan, which included cleaning to remove dust and debris, and consolidating the flaking and crumbling areas of the leather using an appropriate adhesive. Osmond stabilized some of the loose fabric elements around the toe and heel. The outsole stitching holes still have the original stitching thread in them, and those threads were left in place. She created a storage box for the item using conservation-grade materials. Reflecting on her experience working on this project, Osmond wrote, "As a conservator, I have had the opportunity to care for a range of objects, some more challenging than others. Working on this child's shoe was difficult on an emotional level. The memory that this shoe holds is profound and reminded me of how artefacts have the power to prevent us from forgetting." The artefact is now on display as part of *In Focus: The Holocaust through the VHEC Collection*.



X-ray of child's shoe, Canadian Conservation Institute.

The Multiple Lives of Gerda Gottfried Kraus's Notebook

BY RYAN CHEUK HIM SUN



Notebook (Gerda Gottfried), Item 2001.007.025. Donated to the VHEC by Lori Gottfried Seemann.

One of the more interesting items in the personal papers of the Austrian-Jewish Gottfried family¹ is a faded dark-blue notebook belonging to Gerda Kraus (née Gottfried). It was probably given to Gerda sometime in or before June 1936, when she was around ten years old, and living in Vienna. Its pages are filled with dated and undated entries from multiple people, including her parents, siblings, relatives and schoolmates. The earliest entries were contributed by her schoolmates, Gerti Hromek and Martha Kuhst.² They each wrote a short poem. Gerti's poem was about forget-me-nots while Martha's rhyme alluded to the importance of their school lessons. What was the purpose of this notebook? Erna Benah's entry gives us the clearest idea of what Gerda had in mind:

Du willst ich soll dir schreiben
ins Album mein Gedicht,
Verzeih, das ist nicht möglich
denn dichten kann ich nicht.
Und könnte ich auch dichten,

das reizende so nett
es wär nicht wie du selber
so rezend und so nett.

Zur Erinnerung von
Benah Erna.

Translation:

You want me to write you
in the album my poem,
forgive me, that is not possible
for I cannot write poetry.
And even if I could write
an endearing poem so nicely
it wouldn't be like yourself
so charming and so nice.

In memory of
Benah Erna.

To me, Gerda Gottfried's notebook was more than just a notebook, it was a scrapbook of memories.

Each of its 37 entries include a short message to Gerda; most were written between 1936 and 1938. Helene Psczenik and Wilma Varnek wrote of the love they had for Gerda. Mizri Hromadka's* message recalls in rhyme how Mizri remembered Gerda, saying Gerda knew her name, and that Mizri is thankful she can say the same. Other messages, like that of Grete Foltis, wish Gerda good fortune and happiness in life. Her parents, Klara and Leopold Gottfried, wrote similar words of encouragement. Gerda's older sister, Lori, wrote a cautionary rhyme: "Take care that you don't get hurt / Life is not a game." Gerda's older brother, Manfred, wrote that if one wished to be happy in life, one should help

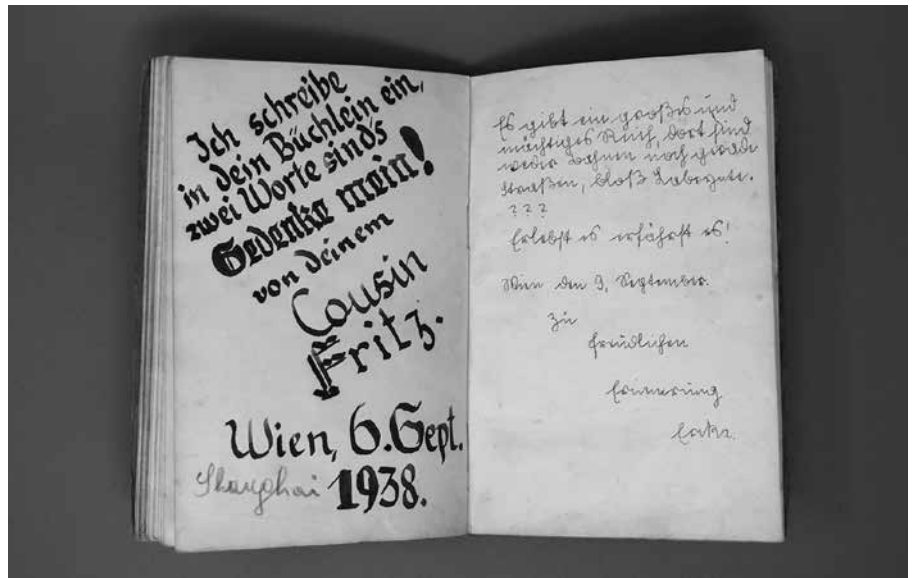
¹ See the Gottfried family fonds, RA001, collections.vhec.org/Detail/collections/15.

² The spelling of individual names have been transcribed from the notebook by the author. In cases where the handwriting is difficult to read, educated guesses have been made to determine the names; these are denoted with an asterisk.

others. The most humorous entry was written by Fritz, Gerda's cousin. In stereotypical German block print, Fritz's handwritten message reads: "I write in your little book two words, 'Remember me!'" And so, Gerda Gottfried's notebook slowly grew as she collected these messages from her friends and family.

As a precious container of her childhood memories, this notebook was one of the items that Gerda took with her when her family was forced to flee Austria and escape to Shanghai. Sometime after her arrival, she may have read the notebook and reminisced about her lost life in Vienna. Perhaps it was in Shanghai that she found a magazine with a picture of a Chinese woman wearing a *qipao* that interested her so much she cut it out and glued it onto the cover of her notebook. Although the notebook's story between the moment of Gerda's escape and Gerda's life in postwar Shanghai is unclear, what is certain is that the notebook was important to Gerda.

On December 26, 1946, Gerda's aunt, Sala, wrote two messages. These are the last entries in the notebook. Unlike the earlier entries in the notebook, these two by Aunt Sala were written with the burden of having survived in Shanghai. During this time, there was a strong desire amongst Shanghai survivors to leave and find out what happened to their friends and families back in Europe. The first entry possibly alludes to Gerda's romantic relationship. Twenty years old at that point, Gerda was corresponding heavily with Hans Kraus, a fellow Jewish refugee from Austria who was employed by the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. Sala's message was advice about love: one should not give their heart for status or desire, but to someone who gives their own in return. Her second entry was similar. This message instructed Gerda to "make use of the sweet hours of youth," because youth can never be returned



Notebook (Gerda Gottfried), Item 2001.007.025. Donated to the VHEC by Lori Gottfried Seemann.

to. Perhaps Sala was encouraging this relationship? Or was she pushing Gerda to enjoy her youth before future responsibilities came in? In either case, Gerda took these messages to heart and pursued a relationship with, and eventually marriage to, Hans Kraus.

What makes Gerda's notebook so fascinating is that it functions not just as a scrapbook of childhood memories, but also as a personal account of postwar knowledge about the Holocaust. It reveals that some notebook contributors escaped Europe while others remained, possibly in hiding during the war years. Of the thirty-seven entries found in the notebook, seventeen are marked with blue pencil crayon, giving a place name: Shanghai (ten), England (three), Belgium (one), Palestine (one), Australia (one) and Poland (one). When these markings were made is unknown, but the fact that one of the entries is 'Palestine' and not 'Israel' suggests a 1945–49 timeframe. The entries with Shanghai written on them were exclusively her family and relatives. But how did Gerda track down the other seven individuals? There could have been personal correspondences; Gerda could have sought information from local Jewish aid organizations, or she could have read her friends' names

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

Tell Me Something

BY ABBY WENER HERLIN

Tell me something,
Safta would urge as she tried to tame
my tangles, calm
my spins, hold
my chin firmly
and look—
her strawberry hair softly held
a French bun with black bobby pins.

I always knew she was in more than one place.

When we would set the table,
Spoon, fork, knife
play dominos,
listen to songs
I just called to say I love you
she would look past
where we were, casting
shadows in the light.

A heaviness, hung
like a cloud,
like crowded clothing, heavy
on a line.

She would carry on
everything in its place
folding perfectly pressed napkins
with eyelet edges;
on her tiptoes standing,
stirring, over a bubbling pot of chicken soup
trimming the bubble-gum-coloured roses

polishing candlesticks before each Shabbat
hours folding over, holding me to her.

I always knew she was in more than one place.

Her story is thin,
sketched in pencil,
faint.

Forced to hide, to remain hidden
in the nursery of a hospital
surrounded by barbed wire
relying on green eyes and strawberry hair to pass for who
she was not.

The cries of babies stung her ears
her job was to soothe them,
their hunger, cut
in hiding.

I always knew she was in more than one place.

Safta could not talk about it,
in the after.

There was no after,
there was always both.

Both is where she carried on,
a life made golden,
of shadowed light.



Excerpted from a manuscript titled *Tell Me Something*, written in honour of Abby's beloved grandmother, Aurelia Gold.

Dr. Abby Wener Herlin is Program and Development Manager at the VHEC.

My Mother's Lullabies

BY SIDI SCHAFFER



Sidi Schaffer with her mother, Sara Spiegel, the year after the war.

Today we speak of intergenerational trauma, about scars, visible or hidden, that our parents or families unintentionally transmitted to us, their children. We speak about our reactions to all that surrounded us when we were growing up. Did we absorb like sponges all our parents' behaviour? Did we emulate our parents, or did we distance ourselves from them? Were we ashamed of their behaviour, their accents, traditions, values?

My mother was a model of goodness, strength and kindness for me and my sister. We grew up with a strong belief in doing the right thing and being respectful to others. At the same time, we developed our own selves

and became independent and creative people. I grew up feeling loved and protected by my parents even though I felt the shadow of their war experience slowly seeping into my own life. It wasn't enough that I had my own memories of fear, hunger, and displacement, surviving the war years as a young child. I was also exposed to the wounds of my parents. Wounds that never healed, but only paled with time.

My mother did not sit down and tell me all she went through during the war. She kept all her worries and fears to herself, but she used songs, poems, and lullabies to convey her feelings. It was impossible not to be touched by my mother's ability to recite long poems by heart or sing Yiddish songs which still warm my soul.

There were songs of hope, like the "Partisan Song":

*Never say you are going on your final road.
Although leadened skies block out blue days,
Our longed-for hour will yet come.
Our step will beat out. We are here!*

Let this song be a reminder for generations to come.

There were songs of despair, like "Vi Ahin Zol Ikh Geyn":

*Tell me, where should I go?
There's no place I can see.*

*Where should I go?
All the doors are closed to me.*

We know very well what that song meant to the Jewish people of Europe.

Another of her songs, "Beltz, my shtetl Beltz," was about the burning of a beloved village, so sad and scary for us children.

There were spiritual songs, and humorous songs ("How to Catch a Boy to Marry"). But one of my favourites, famous throughout the Jewish world, was "Oyfn Pripetshik":

On the pripetshik, by the fireplace, the Rabbi teaches little children the alphabet...

I sang this song to my children, and later to my grandchildren, every time I put them to bed. Many times they asked me for it. I never forgot to tell them that my mother sang it to me when I was little.

Through these songs, my mother transmitted a part of her legacy to me, and now her songs are a part of my inheritance, my identity. ■

Sidi Schaffer was born in northern Romania. She lived in Israel for 16 years and moved to Vancouver in 1998. She is a member of the Child Survivor Group.

in newspapers. In attempting to retrace Gerda's steps and track down the seven friends, I have not been as successful. The only individual I could reliably confirm was Martha Schustik. She fled from Austria to England in the 1930s and years later, participated in the USC Shoah Foundation testimony project.

When I reflect on Gerda's notebook, it makes me think of the postwar chaos that engulfed Holocaust survivors and other victims of the Nazi regime in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War. They all sought to rebuild their lives and to make sense of their traumatic experiences. Most importantly, survivors searched for news about their loved ones. For Gerda, she was able to track down the locations of 17 friends and family. But there are 20 other names without a blue marking. What did she feel when she couldn't write a location down? ■

Ryan Cheuk Him Sun is a PhD candidate in the UBC Department of History. His research examines the entangled histories between Jewish refugees escaping Nazi oppression and the British colonies of Hong Kong and Singapore. He is also interested in the journeys that took Jewish refugees to East Asia, and their experiences in transit onboard ships and trains.

THANK YOU TO OUR DEVOTED VHEC VOLUNTEERS!

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A warm welcome to our new docents:

Tracy Ames, Guillaume Attia, Sarah Casol, Elizabeth Ann Elliot, Norman Gladstone, Audrey Lieberman, Jennifer Monroe, Hamad Abdullah Nazar, Michelle Patton, Giorgia Ricciardi, Erin Salh, Jeff Weissler

DOCENT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Helen Heacock-Rivers, Anita Willson

Our sincere apologies for any errors or omissions.



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Your support is critical in the fight against prejudice, racism and antisemitism. Together, we will work to increase the impact and reach of our teaching and learning about the Holocaust in BC and beyond. We appreciate your generosity.

For more information about the benefits of membership, please visit vhec.org/membership.

Other ways to give:

- Leave a legacy through an endowment fund or planned giving.
- Send a tribute card in honour of a loved one or to mark a special occasion.
- Support our annual fundraising campaign beginning June 5, 2023.

VISIT [VHEC.ORG/DONATE](https://vhec.org/donate) OR CALL (604) 264-0499

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