



Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society

For Education and Remembrance

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HUNGARY: A VOYAGE TO MY ROOTS

Shirley Cohn, Burnaby, B.C.

The seeds for this trip were planted long ago. Both my parents were Hungarian-born, emigrating to the U.S. before World War II. While they remained very involved in their Hungarian heritage, they did not revisit during the years I was growing up. My father could not return to the country where his two sisters, brother and families were killed; nor could he discuss the Holocaust — my questions were dismissed as too painful.

I also simply wanted to see Hungary: I still had an elderly uncle, aunt and cousin whom I had never met. Recently, too, several shoeboxes of family letters had been discovered covering the period 1917 – 1948, with gaps from 1940 – 44. I had begun to have them translated and they are fascinating and poignant letters. Thus, when my one Hungarian speaking cousin decided to organize a trip this past July, another cousin and I jumped at the chance to learn more about our background.

We chose this particular time in order to attend the second annual dedication of the Holocaust Memorial in Budapest, initiated by Tony Curtis in memory of his father Emmanuel, a Hungarian Jew. The memorial, in a courtyard of the Dohany Synagogue, is made from metal in the shape of a willow tree. Each leaf on the tree represents a Jewish person killed by the Nazis. Our family has four.

There were about two hundred people at the dedication, including Teddy Kollek. The Chief Rabbi of Hungary, Peter Kardos, spoke bitterly about the on-going anti-Semitism in Hungary. A younger rabbi spoke about the responsibilities as well as benefits of democracy, and how he hoped the country can manage both. The benefits, of course, include increased recognition of religion, but also freedom of speech, not always a positive spin-off. Candles for the Six Million were lit following the ceremony.

One of the goals of our trip was to visit our parents' hometown, Kisvarda. Kisvarda, population 25,000, is four hours northeast by train from Budapest, 15 kilometers from the Soviet border. We were able to locate the site of our parents' home. The present owner did not think we would experience the original feeling of the home as it had been greatly renovated. A very kind non-Jewish neighbour, Etelka, made herself available to us for the entire day when we described the purpose of our trip.

Etelka led us to her neighbour, Laszlo, one of only thirteen Jewish people still living in Kisvarda. He was twelve years old when the Nazis rounded up all the Jews of the area. Laszlo managed to escape but many in his family were killed. After some initial unease, he also put aside time for us and drove us around town. Under his personal guidance and with his poignant commentary, we felt pride, and sadness, for the rich Jewish life that had existed in Kisvarda before 1944. The Jewish community once numbered 5,000 and was so active it include three houses for circumcision and a Beit Din.

Laszlo drove us to the Jewish cemetery (somewhat neglected), and the Christian cemetery. There we found a large tomb devoted to Jews who had converted to Christianity but were still murdered by the Nazis. The government had dedicated a monument to (the victims of) fascism and one plaque in particular mentioned Jews. We also saw the town museum, the large and beautiful former main synagogue of Kisvarda. In the foyer is a large menorah and on the walls floor to ceiling plaques listing those killed in the Holocaust. On it are my Uncle Jenő, his wife and two year old daughter. A separate wall names those whose deaths in Auschwitz have been confirmed.

This is but a brief summary of a very meaningful trip. I would certainly encourage others to take a similar voyage to their roots — especially with a native speaker. I was pleased to be able to see for myself both signs of current Jewish life and official recognition and denunciation of the Holocaust.

VHCS FALL REVIEW

HIGH HOLIDAYS MEMORIAL SERVICE: September 15. Arranged by board member Leo Lowy at the memorial in Schara Tzedek cemetery and attended by many survivors' families.

EUROPA, EUROPA: October 21. A near sell-out benefit film, co-sponsored with the VJCC Cultural Arts Department, courtesy of the distributor and the Starlight Cinema.

FALL LECTURE SERIES: Co-sponsored with the VJCC Institute of Adult Jewish Learning, the seven part series *The Holocaust and the Human Psyche: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, concluded November 14. A highlight was Anne Lewison's slide talk on the National Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C.

KRISTALLNACHT COMMUNITY ADDRESS: November 10. VHCS was again a donor to this co-sponsored Beth Israel and Canadian Jewish Congress program.

OUTREACH PROGRAM: The Society has provided speakers and information to a variety of organizations and schools this past fall. To date requested speakers have been: Lillian Nemetz to White Rock, Louise Sorenson to Port Moody, David Ehrlich to Deep Cove and Bronia Sonnenschein to New Westminster and Mapleridge and to the UBC Psychiatry medical residents. Peter Parker and Louise Sorenson spoke to students in Gibsons Landing, B.C.

AUDIO/VISUAL PROJECTS: The first four teaching length tapes are now complete and in use. The two hour survivor/eyewitness video testimonies will begin again in January. Contact project co-ordinator Tamara Genesove at 261-1180 if you wish to participate in this essential witness project.

CHILD SURVIVOR GROUP: Child survivors interested in joining the monthly gatherings of this group should call Ruth at 261-5233, or Lillian, 738-8260. Recently the group met for an afternoon of discussion with Kristallnacht speaker Nechama Tec, sociologist, writer and child survivor.

SPECIAL EVENTS

BOOK LAUNCH: November 3, Temple Emanu El, Victoria. *Keeping the Memory: Fifteen Eyewitness Accounts of Victoria Holocaust Survivors* was launched at a reception to honour the survivors who committed their memories and family photographs to the publication of this book. Initiated by Rabbi Victor Reinstein, it was written by Rhoda Kaellis, designed by Anita Kosovic, edited by Ronnie Tessler and co-ordinated by Barry Dunner. VHCS president Robert Krell wrote the introduction and Kit Krieger provided an introduction for teachers. The book was made possible through the generosity of Mrs. Sophie Waldman in memory of her husband Isaac M.I. Waldman, Canadian Job Strategies, VHCS, Stan Fisher and Collen Gibbings, Ana and Alex Porzycanski, Temple Sholom, Congregation Beth Israel and Temple Emanu El. It was printed by West Can Printers of Richmond, B.C.

Keeping the Memory is available for \$10 through the Society office, 261-1180.

EDITOR'S NOTE

One of the Society's most valuable projects is our Outreach program; valuable in that in it is the most requested and valuable in that it reaches the next generation of Canadian citizens with the power to affect what kind of society we will become. Survivor visits, eyewitness testimonies, are the most powerful means we possess in reinforcing the memories and lessons of the Holocaust. Below, in the original, is a student response to a recent visit by Lillian Jagna Nemetz to her grade six class in White Rock.

October 13, 1991

Dear Ms. Nemetz, (Yackna)

thank-you so much for telling us about this. It really helped me understand what it was like to live during the war though I cant feel the pain you did. (Or do.) Im so glad you were lucky and lived threw it because know people can be told about it.

I'd like to compliment you for being so well at talking about it even though I know sometimes it must be hard for you.

I learned a lot while you talked to us. I learnd about the Germans and the Jews and about how hard it was to escape and how some people had only cared for themselves and not for others.

But what I think the meanest thing is how some Germans were so thoughtles and just kild people without caring at all.

Thank you again.

Camille

OTHER NEWS

HOLOCAUST AND WAR VICTIMS TRACING AND INFORMATION CENTER: A branch of this Red Cross service can be contacted through Nancy B. Civin, Information and Referral Specialist, Central Maryland Chapter, 4700 Mount Hope Drive, Baltimore, MD 21215-3200. Call (301) 764-5310 or in the US (800) 848-9277.

THE SIMON WIESENTHAL CENTER NATIONAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE, March 10-12, Washington, D.C. For hotel/rates/travel information, etc. call Los Angeles (213) 553-9036 or Fax (213) 553-4521.

VHCS president Robert Krell addressed the Jewish Business and Professional Women's Group November 26th on *Psychotherapy for Holocaust survivors and their families: Healing the Wounds*.

REQUESTS

Totenbuch-Theresienstadt, published by the Austrian Resistance Archives, lists all Jews deported to Theresienstadt and their final destinations. It can be examined at the Holocaust Education and Memorial Centre of Toronto, 4600 Bathurst. (416) 653-2883, Fax (416) 653-1408.

The Free University of Berlin has been commissioned by the Berlin Senate to collect documents for a **commemorative book** about all former Berliners persecuted by the Nazis. For information contact Robert Engel (see above).

The Canadian chapter of the **Camp Westerbork Foundation** asks that former Nederlanders wishing to place memorial bricks at the camp assembly ground reach Robert Engel (see above).

The **Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre** has opened its new permanent exhibit *Splendor and Destruction: Jewish Life That Was, 1919-1945* across from the Sadie Bronfman Centre at 5151 Cote Ste. Catharines Road.

A commemorative book on **Czenstochnov** is being prepared in Montreal. Write the Czenstochnov Society at 140 Finchely Rd, Montreal, Que. H3X 3A2.

Mr. Ginsberg or Greenberg, a Belgian Jew who gave English lessons in the summer of 1944 to members of the Auschwitz Haftlings Feuerwerhr, housed in stube no. 1, block 15 in Stammlager, Auschwitz 1 contact Sigmund Sobolewski, Box 45, Fort Assiniboine, Alberta.

The committee of the Auschwitz "union" in Israel is attempting to identify and register all **survivors of the "Union" ammunition factory** in Auschwitz. Contact J.A. Heilman 405-1356 Meadowlands Drive, Ottawa, Ontario K2G 6K6.

If you are familiar with the escape of **Giwerta, Goldwurm and Herskovic** from the Peiskretchan Labour Camp, Upper /Silezia in 1942, please contact William Herskovic, PO Box 1604, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

UPCOMING

Photography Exhibit, Presentation House, 333 Chesterfield, North Vancouver, Jan. 31 - March 8, 1992, Kaddish by Nomi Kaplan and **Rescuers of the Holocaust: Portraits** by Gay Block. VHCS will be co-sponsoring a program TBA.

GIFTS AND DONATIONS

Your generous contributions help the Society fulfill its mandate of Holocaust documentation, education and remembrance.

DONATIONS

Sophia Bernard
Paul Meyer
Clifford Margolis
Leslie Spiro
Karl Taussig
Eva and Mayer Levit

Lola Apfelbaum and Regina Feldman in memory of Max Apfelbaum
Gideon and Renate Stuhler
Dennis and Elaine Howe in memory of Ernst Schillinger
Gay Willing in memory of Ernst Schillinger
The Harry and Max Korolnek Family Foundation (of Toronto)
Canadian International College of North Vancouver

RECENT GIFTS

Paul Grunberger — personal documents
David Fishman — photograph
Regina Feldman — photographs
Paul Meyer — personal documents, translations
Leo Lowy — news clipping
Duijfe Van Haren — family documents, yellow star
Barry Dunner — historical artifacts, Poland

Paula Kirman — book and poster collection
Elizabeth Greenberg Kavanagh — books
Yitzhak Pekarsky — memoirs
Ibolya Grossman — memoirs
Ronnie Tessler — books
Robert Krell — historical artifacts, Poland

REQUESTS

The VHC requires artifacts, photographs and documents for its new Holocaust Education Centre and Museum. To donate or loan archival material please call collections chairman Rubin Pinsky, 873-9842. Donations of new books, videos or a substantial library are tax receiptable. Please call 261-1880. Used books and videos are appreciated.

TRIBUTE CARDS

SPECIAL BIRTHDAY

David Feldman by Larry and Esther Brandt,
Jocy and Leo Lowy, and
Robbie Waisman

Ernst Schillinger by Else and Sam Dunner
Elizabeth Greenberg Kavanagh by VHDC board
Haya Heller by Regina and David Feldman

BAT MITZVAH

Liat Reisman by Jocy and Leo Lowy

RETIREMENT

Leo Lowy by Ruby and Gerry Gales, Robbie and Gloria Waisman

ANNIVERSARY

Regina and David Feldman by Larry and Esther Brandt, Harold and Bella Silverman

SPEEDY RECOVERY

Izzy Mackoff by the Poker Gang,
Regina and David Feldman, and
Terry and Art Szajman

Bernard Goldberg by VHCS board
Susie Micner by Mr. and Mrs. E. Heller,
Mr. and Mrs. O. Neuwirth

Hy Belzberg by Molly and Hector Ross
Maurice Trojanowski by Regina and
David Feldman, Mr. and Mrs. I. Fraeme

SYMPATHIES TO

Mrs. S. Minkoff, on loss of husband by Mr. and
Mrs. I. Fraeme
Abe Bialoglowsky, in memory of brother by Art and
Terry Szajman, Regina and David Feldman
Rita Weintraub, in memory of brother by Ronnie Tessler
Mrs. B. Reiner, on loss of husband by Grace and
David Ehrlich
Judy Ross, on loss of son by Jocy and Leo Lowy

Walter Schillinger, on loss of brother Ernst by H. Moss and
M. Harowitz, Philip Levy
Barbara and Joel Schillinger, in memory of Ernst Schillinger
by Philip Levy
Denise Corbett, in memory of Ernst Schillinger by Philip Levy
Susie Micner, on loss of father Israel Lederman by Regina and
David Feldman, Art and Terry Szajman
Goldie Miedzygorski, on loss of father Israel Lederman by Art
and Terry Szajman, Regina and David Feldman

Remember, for there is, there must be, hope in remembering. Elie Wiesel

KEEPING THE MEMORY

FIFTEEN EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS

OF

VICTORIA HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS



PRESS RELEASE

KEEPING THE MEMORY: Fifteen Eyewitness Accounts from Victoria Holocaust Survivors is a new publication from the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society. An anthology of memoirs, it is compiled from interviews collected and edited by Rhoda Kaellis, author of *The Last Enemy*.

This 128 page laminated soft-cover book contains personal Holocaust testimonies from survivors now living in British Columbia. Treasured family photographs accompany their accounts. Students of history and literature as well as adults will find this book absorbing.

KEEPING THE MEMORY would make an excellent addition to the history and biography reader's bookshelf. The survivors' personal testimonies place a human perspective on the enormity of Hitler's state-sponsored genocide. The descriptive passages on re-establishing family life and culture in Canada after the devastation of the Holocaust remain pertinent today.

KEEPING THE MEMORY is available for \$10.

For booksellers price or information
(604) 261-1180

ORDER FORM

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(small supplier)