



# Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society

*For Education and Remembrance*

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VHCS UPDATE

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## CONFERENCE STRIKES A CHORD FOR CHILDREN OF SURVIVORS

*By Randy Tischler, Conference Co-chair*

Survivors, the Second Generation and members of the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society alike, live with vivid, painful memories of the catastrophe that befell our people some 50 years ago. This past fall, on November 15, more than 150 turned out to Vancouver's first-ever Second Generation Conference to explore the multitude of ways in which this reality affects our daily lives.

With Helen Epstein, author of *Children of the Holocaust: Conversations With Sons and Daughters of Survivors*, the participants developed the issues and shared together their personal experiences and perspectives on being children of survivors. Sessions on psychological, political, spiritual and educational aspects of being Second Generation were moderated by Robert Krell, Irvine Epstein, Rabbi Yitzchak Marmorstein and Shayndel Feuerstein respectively.

Emerging from the Conference came a tremendous sense of commonalities past and present shared by the group, and a groundswell of interest in pursuing the discussions further. As a result, a follow-up event for all Second Generation and their spouses/partners was planned for January 28 and hosted by Or Shalom and the VHCS.

### VHCS IN REVIEW

**Second Generation Conference:** The evaluation sheets returned to the Conference committee confirmed the timing and success of this event. One hundred children of survivors and their spouses/partners participated in the working sessions. Rabbi Marmorstein's group on *Jewish Spirituality from a Second Generation Viewpoint* has met twice since the Conference.

**Benefit Film and Lecture Series:** *Yesterday and Today: The Child's Experience of the Holocaust*, co-sponsored with the JCC, opened with the screening of Korczak followed by an exhibit of Tadeusz Nazar's photographs of Polish Jewish cemeteries, a film and discussion series, and an evening with the 1992 March of the Living students. Members of Vancouver's Polish community attended the exhibit and screening of *Tzvi Nussbaum: A Boy From Warsaw*.

**Outreach Program:** The following spoke at 16 locations during the fall: Rob Krell, David Ehrlich, Bronia Sonnenschein, Louise Sorensen, Michel Mielnicki, Ruth Sigal, Rubin Pinsky and Robbie Waisman. Venues included: secondary schools, Hillel House, Beit Hamidrash and Beth Tikvah youth groups, Vancouver Art Gallery, BCIT radio, Portland, Oregon, Vancouver General Hospital, Douglas College Department of Psychiatric Nursing, Calgary, Alberta, and several private student interviews.

**VHCS Holocaust Education Centre Building Project:** Construction at the JCC site is proceeding apace and already shows a portion of our new HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE. Visible are the Survivors' Lounge, offices and reception areas.

**Education Committee:** Recent meetings with the Society's education consultants have resulted in a plan for developing a Holocaust education curriculum for the HOLOCAUST EDUCATION CENTRE. A grant has been applied for.

**Child Survivor Group:** The group continues to meet monthly in private homes and is planning to print a special edition newsletter. For further information, please call Lillian Nemetz at 738-8260.

## WANNSEE CONFERENCE REMEMBERED: 1942-1992

Stan Winfield

On January 19th, 1992, I attended the official dedication of Germany's first memorial centre to the Holocaust, an education facility in the same Wannsee Villa where just fifty years earlier Reinhard Heydrich chaired the so-called "*Wannsee Konferenz*". No one reading this article needs reminding of what took place there on January 20, 1942: suffice it to say, the Nazi's decision to systematically murder the Jews of Europe was made as early as 1933 and by 1942 was already underway. The "*Konferenz*" was convened solely to formalize Hitler's plans for the "Final Solution".

I served with the RCAF in the war. In 1945 I found myself at the Belsen Concentration Camp four weeks after its liberation by the British XXX Corps. I have never forgotten the experience. When I learned of the Wannsee project and the fiftieth anniversary program I made arrangements to attend. It was my privilege to bring official greetings from the president of the International Churchill Societies to the Mayor of Berlin and to Dr. Gerhard Schoenberger, Conference Director. On behalf of the VHCS, I was honoured to deliver a message to Dr. Schoenberger from the Society.

An exhibition on the ground floor of the three-story Villa documents not just the "*Konferenz*", but the events that led up to it - and the resulting Holocaust. On a long table in the centre of the conference room repose, under thick glass, the original minutes as recorded by Eichmann, together with a copy of Goering's memorandum to Heydrich appointing him "Plenipotentiary of the Preparation of the Final Solution of the European Jewish Question". Thirteen smaller rooms portray the entire process of the segregation, persecution, and ultimate genocide of Europe's Jews. The second and third floors of the building will eventually house the Centre's education department and multi-media library. During our tour, Dr. Schoenberger said that he wants the villa to become a "centre of active learning". He emphasized that the original *Konferenz* was not the only meeting held by Nazi officials to plan their policy of genocide against the Jews, but it was the only one for which written records exist.

The city of Berlin was also hosting an exhibition entitled, *Patterns of Jewish Life from Antiquity to the Present*, depicting "Jewish Thought and Beliefs, Life and Work within the Cultures of the World." A heroic venture covering 4,00 square meters in twenty two galleries of the Martin Gropius Museum, it drew huge crowds and much critical acclaim. As I strolled through the stunning displays, I thought back to our *Coat of Many Colours* exhibition - a proud and joyous event celebrating 200 years of Jewish life in Canada, untinged with remorse or penitence. By contrast, next door to the Museum are located the ruins of Heydrich's headquarters, the organizational focal point of the "Final Solution." An exhibit, *Topography of Terror*, documented the buildings that once stood there, including the Gestapo and SS offices. I was accompanied by a young cousin, a third generation Berliner whose parents survived the Holocaust years only because they were not *Volljuden*. Her generation is keenly interested and concerned to learn the history of the Nazi era.

We also visited the Judische Gemeindehaus, on the site of a grand synagogue destroyed on Kristallnacht. The new building, its entrance framed by a majestic arch that survived the destruction, serves as Berlin's Jewish community centre, shul and library. Two armed guards stand watch around the clock. The truly magnificent Oranienburger Strasse Synagogue, which suffered heavy damage on Kristallnacht, was being rebuilt and refurbished...again an armed guard patrolling in front of the building.

As I write these words I am conscious of the terrible events that are even now taking place in Germany. At a final dinner with my relatives, we reflected on my week in Berlin, and post-war Germany in general. How could the monstrosity of the Nazi regime have happened? There was no easy answer, but we felt encouraged seeing knowledge of the Nazi era being disseminated in German newspapers, articles and books, by films and television documentaries, and through the comments of statesmen and churchmen. It may be presumptuous to say it, particularly in the face of the recent xenophobic violence that has erupted in Germany, and the shameful desecration of Jewish cemeteries and memorials, but I believe that many Germans are beginning to assimilate the lessons of their country's horrible past, and that they too will be heard to say, "**Never Again.**"

## VHCS UPCOMING

**Yom HaShoah Cemetery Service:** Noon, April 18, Schara Tzedek Cemetery

**Membership Renewal:** May

**Next Newsletter:** May

**Annual General Meeting:** June

**Campaign:** June 1 - July 31

## ANNOUNCEMENTS AND REQUESTS

**Special Donation:** A special book fund has been established by a Society member and his family. Their very generous donation ensures that important books on the Holocaust may be given annually to students and teachers as a gift from the Society. This fund may be added to by other donors.

**Book Plate:** The VHCS now has a book plate, calligraphied by Sheila Romalis, for donations to the VHCS library.

**A Deluge of Thanks:** Survivor Robbie Waisman, who last spring spoke in Cranbrook B.C., received over *fifty* cards with poems, prayers and Christmas wishes.

**Newsletter:** Would welcome reviews, poems, short prose pieces - and an editor! Although helpful, there is no need to be computer literate. Frustrated writers or editors looking for a paper, please call 734-5325, night or day.

**New Committee:** The VHCS is forming a Public Relations committee. If you have skills in this area and would like to help develop publicity about the work of the Society through writing or by staffing an information booth, please call us.

## ELSEWHERE

The **Jewish Historical Institute of Poland** needs your help in preserving Polish Jewish historical records and artifacts. If you can contribute, please call Alex Dimant at 733-6386.

To join **Children of the Holocaust**, an organization of children who survived the Holocaust on Polish territory, write Dr. Zofia Zaks, Zydowskie Institut Historyczny w Polsce, ul. Itomackie 3/5, 00-90 Warszawa, tel. 27-25-30.

**Hidden Child Foundation Conference:** Jerusalem, July 13-15. Workshops, plenaries, panels and speakers. For information contact the Child Survivor Group at 738-8260.

**Conference on Material Claims Against Germany:** Survivors who can prove 6 months internment in a concentration camp, or 18 months in hiding under inhumane conditions are now eligible to receive reparations, even if they have received a previous claim. If you are now receiving a pension from the German government you are still eligible. There is no deadline for claims. Approved claims will receive \$320 U.S./month beginning August 1995, and a limited interim claim. Send a brief description of your reason for claiming to United Restitution Organization, 4600 Bathurst Street, Suite 121, Willowdale, Ontario, M2R 3V2, tel. (416) 630-2920 and an application will be sent to you.

## GIFTS AND DONATIONS

*Thank you to all our donors - your generous contributions have helped the Society to fulfill its mandate of Holocaust documentation, education and remembrance.*

## RECENT DONATIONS

Josephine Neumann, Peter Reiner, Hans Phillip, Lionel Tenby, Rev. Fred Metzger, Edith Markovitch in memory of her parents Yitzchak & Rivka Lebovitch, brother Mordechai & sister Rachel

Welcome to new Founders Murray Kenig, Freda & Louis Stryer

## RECENT GIFTS TO THE COLLECTION

*To donate books, documents, photographs or artifacts to the VHCS Holocaust Education Centre, please call Collections Chairman Rubin Pinsky at 873-9842. To donate tax receiptable new books, videos or equipment call the office at 734-5325.*

Dr. Jeffrey Claman: 1943 ten mark coin from Lodz Ghetto  
Michel Mielnicki: photos & documents, books & newspapers

Erika Fleischer: labour camp postcards from by her father

Stuart Michelson: book

Frances Hoyd: letter

Leo Lowy: Life magazine with article on Mengele Twins

Roberta Kremer: book

Gari Volpov: father's WW II medals, photo & documents

Asya Zozulya: family letters from 1944

Rubin Pinsky: videos

Jack Gardner: *Landsmanschaft* 50th anniversary souvenir book

Professor Peter Moogk: photos of Nazi occupation of Holland

Marilyn & Robert Krell: book honouring Morris Wosk's Order of Canada

## TRIBUTE OPPORTUNITIES

\$25 will purchase an ADL poster series for classroom use

\$36 will purchase *The Holocaust: A Primary Source Kit* - copies of historical documents for classroom use.

\$72 will purchase the video *The Partisans of Vilna*

\$136 will purchase *Witness to the Holocaust*, a 7 part video for classroom use.

## TRIBUTE CARDS

*To order a card, please call Regina Feldman at 327-3358, Grace Ehrlich at 327-8064 or the office, 734-5325.*

### HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Zoltan & Erika Fleischer on their 30th: Vera & Bernard Rozen

Mr. & Mrs. S. Narvey on their 50th: Leo & Jocy Lowy

Abe & Goldie Miedzygorski on their 45th from: Helen & Bob Coleman; David & Regina Feldman

Rob & Marilyn Krell on their 21st: Jackie & Joel Buller & family

### MAZEL TOV

Barry Dunner & Su T Fitterman on their wedding: Ronnie & Barry Tessler; Sharon Harowitz & Bob Willmot, Rob & Marilyn Krell  
Lil & David Shafran on the birth of a granddaughter: Sharon Harowitz & Bob Willmot

Zev & Elaine Shafran on the birth of a daughter: VHCS Board

Lil & David Shafran on the birth of a daughter: VHCS Board

Rozalia & Frank Hollander on the birth of a grandson: Susan Bluman

### SPEEDY RECOVERY

From David & Grace Ehrlich to: Dr. Saul Gelfand; Morris Lank

From David & Regina Feldman to: Abe Bialoglowsky; Julie Gutovich

From Leo & Jocy Lowy to: Harold Silverman; Joe Cohen; Izzy Parker; Sarah Bialoglowsky; Morris Lank; Lyle Thompson; Harry Cramer; Joy Zion

From Art & Terry Szajman to: Abe Bialoglowsky

From VHCS Board to: Leo Lowy; Henry Narayan

### SYMPATHIES TO

Paul Hess & Ruth Dolgin: VHCS Board

Richard Israel in memory of his mother: Lyliane & Larry Thal

Mrs. L. Fryfield & family in memory of her husband: Leo & Jocy Lowy

Mrs. Kiva Knopp & family in memory of her husband: Leo & Jocy Lowy

George Weinstein in memory of his wife: Leo & Jocy Lowy

Etta Klausner in memory of her sister: Leo & Jocy Lowy

Jack Kowarsky in memory of his father: Lil & David Shafran

Jack Kowarsky in memory of his father: VHCS Board

Jack Kowarsky in memory of his father: Evelyn & Leon Kahn

Bernice Neuwirth in memory of Oscar: Evelyn & Leon Kahn

Dr. W. Weinstein in memory of his father: Fleischer family

Mrs. Oscar Weinstein in memory of her husband: Fleischer family

Mr. & Mrs. Lank in memory of his father: Rachel & Herschel Wosk

Richard Israel's & family in memory of Sylvia Israel's: Sharon Harowitz and Bob Willmot

Dr. George Szasz in memory of his mother Rose: Robert and Marilyn Krell

Frankel & Seelig families in memory of Heinz Seelig: Sharon Harowitz and Bob Willmot

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