

The Newsletter of the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre

# Zachor

"Remember"

Number 2,  
April 2004



**UNLIKELY HEROES**

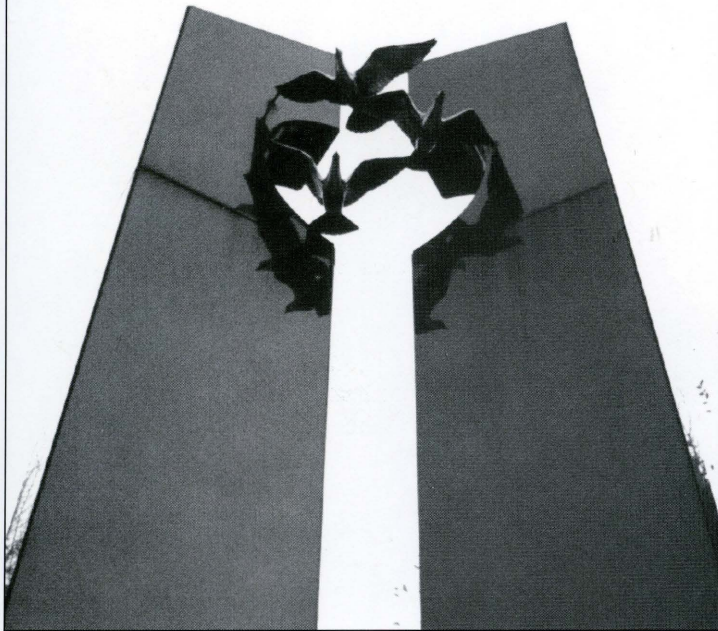
STORIES OF JEWISH RESISTANCE



Join us in observing  
Yom HaShoah Holocaust Memorial Day  
Community Wide Commemorative Event

### Yom HaShoah Cemetery Service 12:00 Noon, Sunday, April 18, 2004

Schara Tzedek Cemetery  
2345 SW Marine Dr., New Westminster, BC.



### Inside this Issue

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Light One Candle  | 3     |
| No Longer Alone   | 7     |
| Unlikely Heroes   | 8     |
| No Time to Mourn  | 9     |
| Yom HaShoah   | 10    |
| Gurs Haggada  | 12    |
| From the Archives   | 13    |
| Cards & Donations   | 15    |
| Book In Every Hand  | 16    |
| Leon Kahn z'l with three<br>of the partisans with whom<br>he lived in Aran in fall 1944 | Cover |

### Special Film Screening *Sugihara: Conspiracy of Kindness*

Tentatively Scheduled for  
7:30 PM – May 5, 2004  
at Temple Sholom, 7190 Oak Street

#### Discussion to Follow with Special Guests

Filmmaker, Diane Estelle, Author & Survivor, Solly Ganor and Eric Saul, Director, Visas For Life Foundation.

Please confirm the date by calling:  
Temple Sholom 604-266-7190

A remarkable documentary film about Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese diplomat who risked his life and career, to issue transit visas to Jews fleeing Lithuania. Access to the Sugihara family's personal films, photos and papers helped shape this inspirational story. The film also chronicles the unique relationship between the Japanese and the Jews during the war.

See article on page 6 of this issue...

### Holocaust Education Book for Teenagers to be Launched on April 19<sup>th</sup> 2004 at Downtown Library

*Faces of Courage: Young Heroes of World War II*, a Holocaust education book for teenagers will be launched on April 19<sup>th</sup> at 7:30 at The Vancouver Public Library's downtown branch. *Faces of Courage*, is an inspiring compilation of twelve stories of young rescuers, resisters, victims and survivors of Nazi tyranny including Christians, Gypsies, Jews and young people with disabilities. The book was written by Sally Rogow.

For more information about the reading call Granville Island Publishing at 604-688-0320 or email publicist David J. Litvak at djl-litvak@yahoo.com

## Zachor

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# LIGHT ONE CANDLE

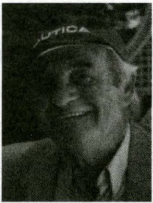
## Special Reception Honoring our Docents and Survivor speakers

7:30 p.m. Thursday, May 6, 2004  
in the VHEC

Special guests:

Solly Ganor author of *Light One Candle*  
& Eric Saul, Exhibit Curator

Program and Refreshments



### Solly Ganor

Solly Ganor was born on May 18, 1928 in Heydekrug, a small German-speaking town near the East Prussian border. He was the youngest of three children of the Genkind family. In 1933, when Hitler came to power, the Genkinds moved to Kovno (Kaunas). Solly had to adjust from speaking German to Yiddish, Lithuanian and Hebrew.

Kovno was a lovely city of nearly 120,000 people. More than thirty thousand Jews lived and prospered in the town, Solly's family among them. For many years, Kovno was one of the few places in Europe where the Jews were able to live nearly autonomously, and they built a strong community. Its Yeshivas [Jewish religious schools] attracted students from all over Europe. Its cultural life was diverse and sophisticated. Several Yiddish newspapers and a Yiddish theater, were part of the Jewish culture. Most of the Jews of Kovno were Zionist. Solly remembers his childhood as a very happy one.

During Chanuka 1939, Solly met Chiune Sugihara, the Japanese consul to Lithuania. The Genkinds were among the first to receive a life saving visa from Chiune Sugihara, but when the Soviets entered Lithuania their passports became invalid. The family was caught up in the Nazi invasion and spent three years interned in the Kovno ghetto, where most Jews were killed in Actions or sent away in various deportations. In the spring of 1944, on the eve of the Soviet reoccupation of Kovno, the Genkinds were deported to German concentration camps; only Solly, his father and his sister survived.



Solly Ganor survived the death march from Dachau and was liberated by a unit of the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion of the US Army. The unit consisted of Japanese American soldiers, most of whom had volunteered for military service from American relocation camps. The person who saved him was Private Clarence Matsumura, who was reunited with Solly in Jerusalem in 1992. After his liberation Solly worked as an interpreter for the U.S. Army Intelligence Unit helping identify and prosecute Nazi collaborators hiding among the survivors in D.P. Camps.

After the war, Solly's father Chaim, married Ethel Osprey, a Canadian who was in charge of United Nations Relief Agency (UNRRA) in the Munich area. Solly was to join them in Canada. On May 15, 1948, when the State of Israel was declared, Solly joined the Israeli Defense Forces and fought in the War of Independence.

After the war, he joined the Israeli merchant marine, where he reached the rank of Captain. Later Solly studied English Literature and languages at London University. In 1963, he returned to Israel where he married his present wife Pola. They have two children, Daniel and Leora, and three grandchildren.

Solly's memoir, *Light One Candle* has been widely acclaimed. The book has been translated into German and Japanese.

Recently, Solly reflected, "I feel I have finally fulfilled my promise to my perished friends and family to tell their stories. I have finally lit 'One Candle' for them."



# The 522<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion:

## A Brief History of the Liberators of Dachau

by Marie-Luise Ermisch

During World War II the Jews of Nazi Europe and Japanese Americans shared the experience of discrimination. Both were isolated from the communities in which they lived. The Jews were isolated because, according to Nazi doctrine, they were “unfit to live,” while the Japanese Americans were not recognized as fully American and were therefore seen as a security threat. By a twist of fate the end of the war brought these two persecuted minorities together in the liberation of the Dachau concentration camp, where the Japanese American 522nd Field Artillery Battalion brought freedom to the Jews interned there. The following outlines the story of the 522<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, and how it came to liberate Dachau.

Discrimination against Japanese Americans intensified on December 7, 1941 when Japan attacked the United States. The surprise attack placed the Japanese living in the US into a difficult position: their loyalties lay with the country they were living in, which they would sacrifice their lives for, but most of their countrymen did not trust the American patriotism of the Japanese Americans. The American government found them to be a security threat and forced the Japanese of the west coast of the US into relocation camps. Anti-yellow propaganda and racism toward the Japanese became a part of daily life in the United States. Many Americans simply could not distinguish between Japanese Americans and the enemy from Japan. At a time when the United States needed all able-bodied men to fight their war, the US Army discharged all Japanese Americans in the armed services.



Photograph of a Japanese-American soldier of the 522<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion in Waakirchen, Germany with three Dachau survivors. The Battalion liberated the camp on May 2, 1945. Photo: George Oiye.

In 1943 President Roosevelt, realizing that he had a war to win, called upon the Nisei, “first generation Japanese born in the US of alien parents”, 2500 from the mainland and 1500 from Hawaii, to serve in the US army. More than ten thousand Nisei, men and women, volunteered, most from Hawaii. They volunteered for the honor of their families and to prove their loyalty to a country that regarded them with suspicion. Those chosen faced two struggles during WWII: one against the enemies of the US and another on the home front, the battle of misunderstanding and prejudice. Only the best were selected from those who volunteered. Many grown men, who so badly wanted to serve their country, cried upon their rejection.

In April, 1943, the Nisei arrived at Camp Shelby, Mississippi for basic military training. In the beginning it was not easy for them. There was pressure from the local community near Camp Shelby. Even though they were in the uniform of the American forces the Nisei were still taunted with racist remarks. The whole project was kept low profile, for if the American public had known about this Japanese unit they would have been against it. At Camp Shelby the 442nd Battalion was created as a self-contained all Japanese American unit. They proved to be so efficient in the field that their commander sent a message back to the US stating that more Nisei were needed for battle.

In 1944 the 442<sup>nd</sup> was sent to Italy to join the 100th Infantry Battalion. Their most memorable campaign was the rescue of the Lost Battalion, the 141<sup>st</sup> Regiment. The Lost Battalion was completely surrounded by the enemy and could not break through their lines. It was a very dangerous mission but the 442<sup>nd</sup> saved them. After the Champagne Campaign in France in 1944/1945 the 522<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion was separated from the 100th/442<sup>nd</sup>. Due to their well-known efficiency and accuracy, General Patch requested the 522<sup>nd</sup> to help break through the German lines. The 522<sup>nd</sup> specified in missile engines and weapons, such as catapults and arbalests. Its soldiers needed strong math skills in order to calculate target distance, gun range, gun angle and powder strength before their guns could be fired.

On March 27th, 1945 the only Nisei unit to fight on German soil, the 522<sup>nd</sup>, crossed the Rhine River with the 44th Division and entered Germany. When the 522nd reached Bavaria, the Germans were fleeing so quickly that



the 522<sup>nd</sup> could barely keep up with them and the US infantry unit, which they were accompanying, could not keep up with the 522<sup>nd</sup>.

As they moved deeper into Bavaria, they witnessed extremes of human suffering. They came across several subcamps of Dachau where they found people who were afraid to come out and talk to the soldiers. As Clarence Matsumura, a Nisei of the 522<sup>nd</sup>, remembers, "We were staring at them, and they were staring back at us, Orientals in U.S. Army uniforms. It took us a moment to realize these were not German workers, but prisoners. We didn't know anything about slave labour camps then. We didn't know what the hell was going on." When the soldiers realized that these were prisoners, they knocked down the gates to free them.

In April, 1945 the 522<sup>nd</sup> came upon the main camp of Dachau. Clarence testified that, "Right in the middle of town there was what looked like a big factory, with a high fence all around and two big brick smokestacks in the middle. Before we ever reached it we noticed an odd smell...[the] smell of decaying flesh. There were dead corpses all piled everywhere..." The Nisei asked the people of Dachau about the camp, and were told that the SS had led most of the prisoners away on foot. The 522<sup>nd</sup> went in the direction they were pointed and found many Dachau prisoners who had headed out on the death march lying scattered along the roadside, some alive, others dead. Although they were supposed to be pursuing the SS, the Nisei gave priority to helping the victims. They tried to provide food and shelter. Some were so weak that they could not even swallow water, let alone eat. "You really can't explain how it is, when you've got all these people, so many of them, and they're dying right there in your hands." Thus the 522<sup>nd</sup> unit, composed of a minority that was being persecuted themselves, liberated the persecuted Jewish minority of Europe.

Solly Ganor, was one such Jewish prisoner who was saved by the 522<sup>nd</sup> Battalion after being sent on the forced death march. He did not have the strength to continue marching and therefore collapsed on the side of the road. The silence when he awoke told him he was free. His first thoughts of freedom were that he must find food. He got kindling from an overturned wagon for a cooking fire, and a



Private Tahoe Sugita of the 522<sup>nd</sup> Field Battalion with a camp survivor.  
Photo: George Ojiye.

lighter from the pocket of a dead civilian. He then cut meat strips from a nearby dead horse and cooked it with some potato peels he had found in an aluminum canteen. Then a tank appeared. Solly's heart sank at the thought of his short-lived freedom. The soldiers were Japanese however, not Germans. He was astonished by their oriental features, and could not grasp why the Japanese were fighting in Europe. One of the men, Clarence Matsumura, told him in English that he was free and gave him a chocolate bar. Solly understood that he had been saved by this Japanese American Battalion. After Solly finished his soup, Clarence took him to an American camp where he was taken care of. While to the Americans the Nisei seemed to be a threat, to the liberated victims of the Holocaust they were heroes. Solly will never forget Matsumura. The smile that Matsumura wore when he told Solly of his freedom, stayed with Solly forever.

After their encounter with the inmates of Dachau, the 522<sup>nd</sup> stayed in Germany, ferreting out Nazis wanted for war crimes. In January, 1946 the 522<sup>nd</sup> returned home as decorated American war heroes. The 522<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Battalion is but one example of Nisei accomplishments during World War II. It is the most decorated American unit for its length of service in the war and possibly was the best artillery unit backup group of WWII. Most notable, however, are not their war medals, but the humanity they showed and the freedom they gave to the victims of the Holocaust.



## Chiune Sugihara: Diplomat Rescuer in Kovno

By Jonathan Friedrichs

The Nazis could not have carried out the Holocaust without the sanction of the general population in occupied Europe. The majority of people under Nazi control showed compliance, if not outright collaboration, during the genocide of the Jews. Less than one-half of one percent of those under Nazi occupation actively worked to rescue Jews. Chiune Sugihara, a Japanese diplomat and the Consul of Lithuania, was one of the few who took such a risk. He helped approximately six thousand Jews escape Europe and thus rescued the second largest number of Jews saved by one man during the Holocaust.

Sugihara's diplomatic career began in 1932 in Japanese-controlled Manchuria, in northeastern China. He had excelled as a Foreign Ministry student in Russia and shortly after graduation he landed his first important posting as Vice Chief of the Foreign Affairs Department in Manchuria. However, as events unfolded Sugihara grew disenchanted with his government's policies and the inhumane treatment of the Chinese by the Japanese military. Sugihara followed his strong moral convictions and resigned his post in protest in 1934. He returned home to Japan where he met and married Yukiko Kikuchi.

In 1939, with World War II looming on the horizon and because of Sugihara's knowledge of Russian, the Japanese government enlisted him to work in the consulate in Kovno, Lithuania. He was to report back on the military movements of the Soviets and Germans. Only months after settling into his new post, the Nazis invaded Poland and a wave of Jewish refugees streamed into Lithuania. With the arrival of the refugees came horrific stories of Nazi atrocities and the realization that Hitler was rapidly tightening his grip on Eastern Europe.

In the midst of this sinister climate, Jewish refugees made desperate pleas to Sugihara for the life-saving transit visas out of Europe. Shortly after the Soviet occupation of Lithuania, in June 1940, all foreign embassies were shut down. Sugihara, however, obtained a 20-day extension. Apart from the acting Dutch consul, Jan Zwartendijk, Sugihara was now the last remaining foreign consul in Kovno. Evident after the 1938 Evian Conference, immigration of Jewish refugees into other nations was nearly impossible. However, Sugihara and Zwartendijk discovered that Curacao and Surinam, two remote Dutch colonies in the Caribbean, did not require entrance visas. The Dutch consul received permission to stamp passports to those destinations. However, in order to get there

one needed to travel through the Soviet Union and then depart via Japan. Sugihara convinced the Soviet consuls to grant safe passage for refugees, provided they had a valid transit visa to Japan. Sugihara then petitioned Tokyo for permission to provide these visas, but was rejected each time.

Sugihara suddenly had to make a crucial decision. Despite the risk to his career and personal safety, he decided he must disobey his government and save Jewish lives. When asked later why he took the risk, he responded, "Those people told me the kind of horror they would have to face if they didn't get away from the Nazis and I believed them. There was no place else for them to go.... If I had waited any longer, even if permission came, it might have been too late." From July 31 to August 28, Chiune Sugihara worked endlessly signing visas. He sometimes wrote hundreds of visas in one day, a task normally requiring several weeks. Unfortunately for the Jews in Kovno, by the end of August the Soviets demanded that Sugihara leave the city. After illicitly signing thousands of visas, Sugihara's rescue efforts came to an end.

Sugihara spent the remainder of World War II in various consulates throughout Europe. In the aftermath of the German defeat, Sugihara and his family were held for over a year and a half in Russian internment camps. Finally, in April 1947 the Sugiharas returned to Japan. Only then did they learn that the Japanese government had unceremoniously dismissed Sugihara from diplomatic service due to "that incident in Lithuania." Sugihara's career as a diplomat was shattered. He spent the remainder of his life doing modest work as a translator and later as a manager of a trade company in Moscow. He died in Japan in 1986.

The transit visas that Sugihara issued to Jewish refugees in 1940 served as tickets to freedom and life. It is estimated that as many as six thousand Jews escaped Eastern Europe due to the altruistic efforts of Sugihara. Because of his efforts he was honoured in 1985 as "Righteous Among the Nations" by Yad Vashem. He took a risk of magnitude scarcely seen during the Holocaust, and thus created a long list of Sugihara Survivors.

*Continued on page 16...*





## Kindertransport.

by Irene N. Watts

Prewar Berlin and the years from 1939 – 45 in England and Wales is the world I grew up in. It was a world of disappearances and good-byes that no one had time to explain to a small girl. Perhaps the adults did not have the answers.

I was seven and a half years old when I left Germany on a Kindertransport. My mother dressed me in three pairs of underwear, and I carried a small suitcase, which contained, amongst the sweaters and pleated skirts, a pale blue, ankle length silk party dress. It had been made especially, in case I should be invited to a garden-party at Buckingham palace. Unfortunately the party did not materialize and the dress remained unworn. I also carried a doll "Kathe."

Typical foster parents, who opened their homes to the young refugees, were average English people who did not speak German, and whose knowledge of the events taking place in Europe was gleaned from occasional newspaper reports. Many of the homes were non-Jewish. There were simply not enough Jewish homes to go around.

In 1945, the end of the war revealed that countless Jewish families had not survived and most of the Kinder lost one or both parents. The reality was that if the parents had not made it out before the start of World War II, survival was rare.

My own parents came over to England on a 'Domestic' permit, as servants. My father was immediately interned as an 'enemy alien', first on the Isle of Man, and then shipped to Australia. By the time governments discovered that they had interned hundreds of innocent Jewish refugees (my father was a devout Jew who had recently been incarcerated in Sachsenhausen concentration camp) it was too dangerous to return them to England.

There were many disadvantages in being a refugee with the unpronounceable name of Kirstein, and yes, there were incidents of what we would now call racism. But I will never cease to be grateful to the many homes that took me in, the teachers who educated me, the opportunity to attend university and make something of my life. It wasn't an ideal childhood, but I consider myself lucky.

## Storm of Evil

by Leo Vogel

We are the last! The children of the Holocaust, who can still bear witness to its atrocities.

But, when we too have breathed our last, a strong wind will swell around the world.

It will come roaring  
from the throats of deniers,  
as they expel  
a collective sigh of joy.

Then, once more,  
the fallow fields will turn fertile, to receive the seeds of the unimaginable.

## The Ship of Tears

by Andrew J. Karsai

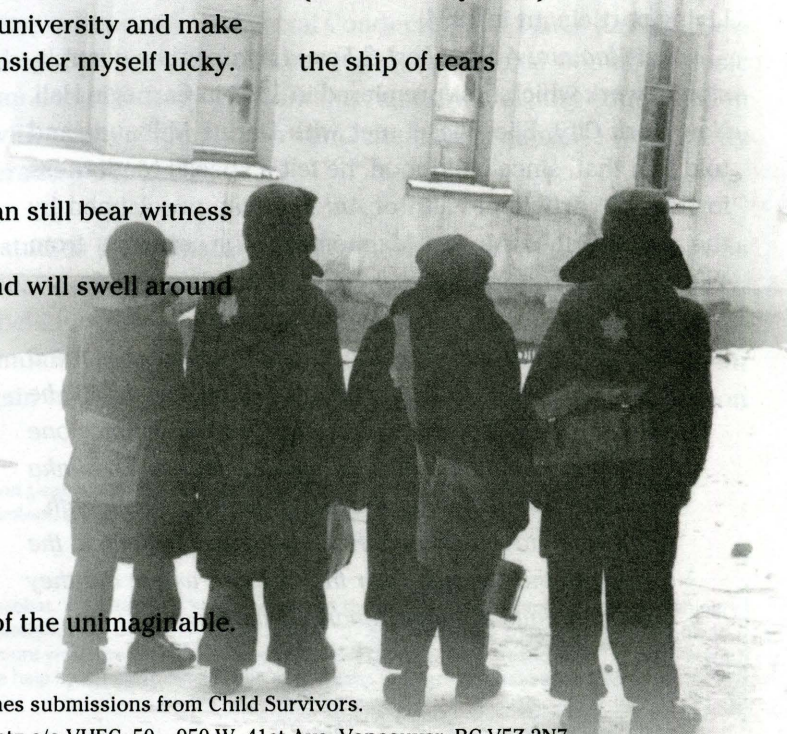
we are just insane sailors  
on the ship of tears  
how did we arrive  
into this harbor?  
is this cease fire real?

Our sails are made of yellow stars  
our masts are made of gallows  
for our mothers  
for our fathers

we are just insane sailors  
deck hands  
on the ship of tears

ship without rafts  
ship without staff  
ship without a captain  
ship without an answer  
ship no one can sink  
(oh how many tried)

the ship of tears



The "No Longer Alone" Page welcomes submissions from Child Survivors.

Send submissions to the NLA editor: Lillian Boraks Nemetz c/o VHEC, 50 – 950 W. 41st Ave, Vancouver, BC V5Z 2N7



# Community Wide Yom HaShoah Commemorative Evening

Join us In Observing Yom HaShoah Holocaust Remembrance Day 27 Nisan 5764

## Selections from *Ani Maamin: A Song Lost & Found Again*

Text by Elie Wiesel, Music by Darius Milhaud.

Performed by Soprano Soloist Gisele Kulak, Pianist Adolfo De Santis, Narrator and Director Judy Kopelow *ma - min*

Sunday, April 18, 2004, 7:30 p.m.

Temple Sholom Synagogue, 7190 Oak Street, Vancouver, BC

*Candle Lighting in Memory of the Six Million who perished, The 60th Anniversary of the Nazi Invasion of Hungary*  
Also featuring the Vancouver Jewish Men's Choir

*Ani Maamin – I Believe* is a haunting Hasidic melody that is the inspiration for the poignant musical cantata that will be the centerpiece at this year's Yom HaShoah Community wide commemorative event.

This year the annual community wide Yom HaShoah observance will also pay tribute to the 60th Anniversary of the Nazi Invasion of Hungary – the beginning of the Hungarian Holocaust. Opening remarks will be delivered by a Hungarian Survivor and the annual candle lighting ceremony in memory of the six million Jews who perished during the Holocaust, will be led by Hungarian Survivors. The program will also feature the Vancouver Jewish Men's Choir and a brief address by Jolene Fehler, a March of the Living participant in 1994.

*Ani Maamin: A Song Lost & Found Again* was a commissioned work which first premiered in 1973 in Carnegie Hall, New York City. Elie Wiesel met with Darius Milhaud and told him that, since childhood, he felt a special tenderness for the 12<sup>th</sup> Article of Faith of *Ani Maamin*, proclaimed by the great Rabbi Moses Maimonides. An excerpt from Wiesel's, *And The Sea is Never Full* recalls this meeting:

*As children we had sung the original melody. For me it was a call to faith and an affirmation that even though he was late, the Redeemer would make his appearance one day. Later I learned that Jews on their way to Treblinka and Birkenau had sung that song, as if to defy death. And I failed to understand: How could they believe in the coming of the Messiah over there? From where did they draw their faith in divine kindness and grace?*

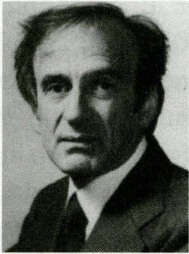
*Then I sometimes question the child with me. What in the world was God doing while His people were being massacred and incinerated? What were the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob doing while their descendants were humiliated and sent to their death? Were they not, according to our tradition, our protectors and intercessors? Why didn't they shake the celestial throne with their prayers and drown it in their tears?*

The traditional *Ani Maamin* is sung at commemorations to emphasize that the dead, at the moment of dying, have still maintained their faith. However, we also know that sometimes it was sung to reflect total despair. In their solitude, Jews realized that they could count on no one. The free and "civilized" world had handed them over to their executioners. The world remained silent. Both approaches to *Ani Maamin* are justified and equally significant.

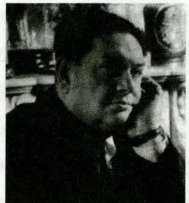
*There were Jews who prayed for the Messiah, and others who were ready to send him away. There were those who clung to the belief that all was not lost, and others who proclaimed that humanity was doomed. To say, as I do in my cantata, that the silence of God is God, is both an admission of resignation and an affirmation of hope. The whole question of faith in God, surely in spite of man and perhaps in spite of God, permeates this cantata.*



*Selections from Ani Maamin: A Song Lost & Found Again*, text by Elie Wiesel, music by Darius Milhaud, will be performed by Gisele Kulak, Soprano Soloist & Adolfo De Santis, Pianist. Directed and Narrated by Judy Kopelow.



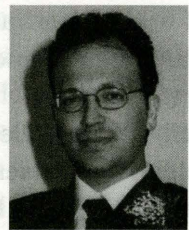
**Elie Wiesel** wrote the text of *Ani Maamin: A Song Lost & Found Again*. Mr. Wiesel was born in 1928. When he was 15, he and his family were deported from Sighet, Transylvania, to Auschwitz, where his mother and younger sister perished. Wiesel and his father were later taken to Buchenwald where his father died. After the war, Elie Wiesel became a journalist and writer in Paris. He is an active spokesman for peace and human rights all over the world and his achievements have earned him numerous honors including the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986. He has written more than forty books and won numerous literary awards.



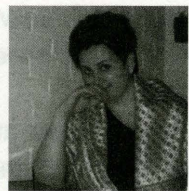
**Darius Milhaud** was born in 1892 into a Jewish family in Aix-en-Provence. He trained at the Paris Conservatoire, originally as a violinist, before turning to composition. During the War years, Milhaud lived in the United States and was influenced by American Jazz and popular Brazilian music. He returned to France and to the Paris Conservatoire in 1947. He became one of the most prolific composers of the 20th century with over 400 works to his credit. He died in 1974.



**Gisele Kulak**, Soprano Soloist, completed her musical training at the University of Saskatchewan, and moved to Toronto in 1990. Since then, audiences across Canada have praised Gisele Kulak for the beauty and sincerity of her singing. Gisele has done a number of solo recitals and has performed with The York Symphony, in Mozart's "Requiem", and The Toronto Symphony. Kulak performed as solo soprano in Kopelow's 2001 production of *Ani Maamin: A Song Lost & Found Again*.



**Adolfo De Santis** is a Canadian born musician who has lived and studied music in Italy. He graduated with distinction in Piano, Composition and Orchestral Conducting. De Santis has won several national competitions and taken the top prize in the Stresa International Chamber Music Competition. He made his Canadian debut in early 1998 and has since played and conducted in many concerts and collaborated with opera singers, choirs and chamber groups. He is currently opera director of the Toronto Opera Repertoire.



**Judy Kopelow** pursued graduate studies in Comparative Religion at the University of Manitoba where she confronted the Holocaust during her studies. While a student she came upon Elie Wiesel and Darius Milhaud's compelling work, *Ani Maamin: A Song Lost & Found Again*. A grant from the Winnipeg Jewish community helped her produce the first performances of *Ani Maamin*. The work was staged again in 2000 & 2001 as part of Toronto's Holocaust Education Week, to critical acclaim.

Produced by the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre, with support from the Gail Feldman Heller Endowment Fund of the Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society, Temple Sholom, Jewish Federation of Greater Vancouver.

Please Help a Jewish Household Celebrate Shabbat. Volunteers collecting candles at the Yom HaShoah Commemorative evening. At the moment, approximately 300 Jewish households rely on the Jewish Food Bank to help them make ends meet. The struggle to manage on minimum wages, or disability pensions would be overwhelming without this support. Shabbat and Yom Tov candles are a luxury item on an inadequate budget. Please help by donating candles that enable Jews to celebrate Shabbat and Yom Tovim.



## UNLIKELY HEROES

*Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center For Holocaust Studies & The Vancouver Holocaust Centre Society  
Proudly Invite You To the Vancouver Premiere Screening of the film*

# UNLIKELY HEROES

STORIES OF JEWISH RESISTANCE

With A Special Tribute To

Leon Kahn z"l

Celebrating the launch of Kahn's memoir *No Time To Mourn*  
published through the VHEC Wosk Publishing Program and Ronsdale Press

Film Screening, Sunday, May 30<sup>th</sup>, 2:30 p.m.

Oakridge Centre Cineplex Odeon Theatres

601 – 650 West 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue

Tickets: \$18 for Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre members  
or Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center  
\$25 for non-members

## Unlikely Heroes: Stories of Jewish Resistance

For most people, the idea of Jewish resistance or defiance during the Holocaust is limited to the heroism of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising and a few isolated acts. The prevailing view is that Jews went to their deaths like "sheep to the slaughter". Yet, the fact is, on both an individual and organized level, Jews resisted and defied their Nazi persecutors by taking up arms, and through numerous spiritual acts.

*Unlikely Heroes* was produced by Moriah Films, awarded Academy Awards for previous documentaries, *Genocide*, and *The Long Way Home*. *Unlikely Heroes*, examines what it meant to resist or stand up to the Nazis during the most desperate days of the Holocaust. Rare film and images discovered in archives in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Lithuania and the former Soviet Union, animate these previously unknown incidents of Jewish resistance and heroism. *Unlikely Heroes* highlights seven people who showed courage and acted to preserve a measure of human dignity.

*Unlikely Heroes*, which chronicles yet untold stories of Jewish resistance and individual heroism throughout the Holocaust, including Leon Kahn's story, will be

screened Sunday, May 30, at 2:30 p.m. at the Oakridge Odeon Cineplex Theatre. It is part of a joint fundraising event for the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center and the Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre.

"We're taking *Unlikely Heroes* to all the major Jewish communities in Canada," says Avi Benlolo, the Wiesenthal Center's Canadian Director. Rabbi Marvin Hier, the Dean and Founder of the Wiesenthal Center, who co-produced and co-wrote *Unlikely Heroes* with Richard Trank, Media Director of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, will be present at the Vancouver screening.

Tickets will be available at \$500 per person at the Patron level, which includes tickets to the screening, as well as, to the Patron Luncheon, acknowledgement in the program and a copy of Leon Kahn's book, *No Time To Mourn*. General admission for the screening is \$25 (\$18 for Vancouver Holocaust Education Centre members and Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center). A word to the wise: the Toronto premiere was sold out, so purchase your tickets early. For more information, or to order tickets call the VHEC (604) 264-0499.



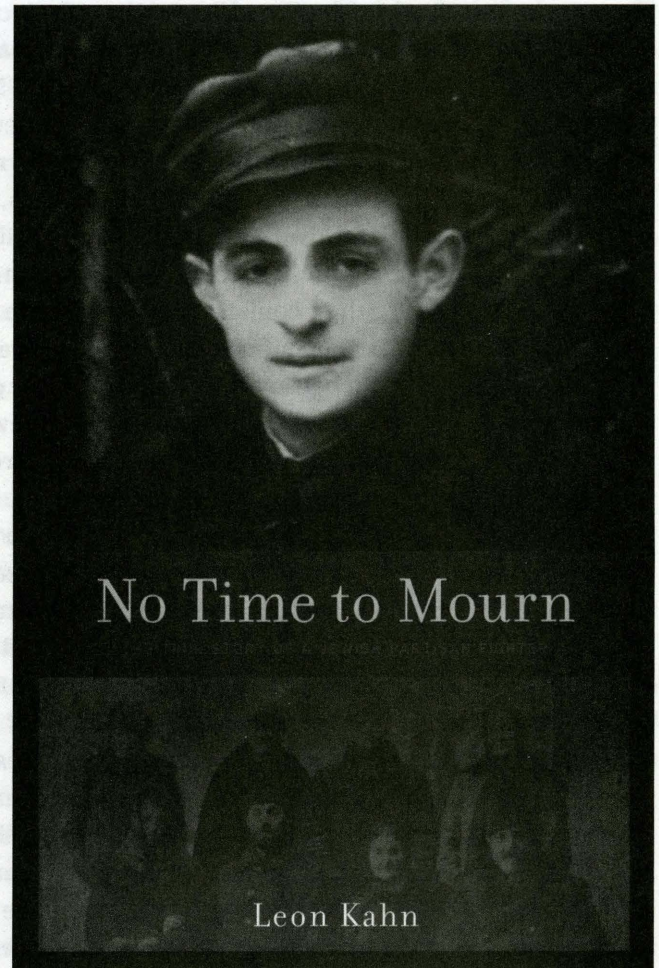
# No Time To Mourn: The True Story of a Jewish Partisan Fighter

*The Wosk Publishing Program & Ronsdale Press Announce the Launch of Leon Kahn's memoir*

Leon Kahn was born Leon Kaganowicz in 1925 in Eisishkes, Poland, near present-day Vilnius, Lithuania. Growing up Jewish in the shtetl of Eisishkes near the Polish-Lithuanian border, Leon Kahn experienced a peaceful childhood until September 1, 1939 when Hitler's forces attacked Poland. Only sixteen, Kahn watched as the women and children of his community were herded into a gravel pit and murdered. Realizing that to stay meant certain death, Kahn tore off his yellow star of David identifying him as a Jew, and fled with his father, brother and sister to the Polish forests and the uncertain welcome of a few farmers who, at risk to their own lives, would offer temporary food and shelter. Here Kahn tells the little known story of the family groups of Jews and non-Jewish partisan fighters, composed of Russians and Poles, who roamed the forests outside the towns in search of food and weapons. As a partisan fighter, Kahn was given guerilla training and soon became an expert in blowing up German trains. The story of the partisan struggle is as engrossing as it is terrible, for Kahn describes in detail those uncertain times when one never knew who was friend, who was enemy. The final irony may well have come at the end of the war when both the Russian and the American forces, detained Kahn for a time, as an enemy alien. Eventually, his search for freedom was successful: the memoir ends with his immigration to Canada in 1948 and his assertion in Vancouver that "this is my home now."

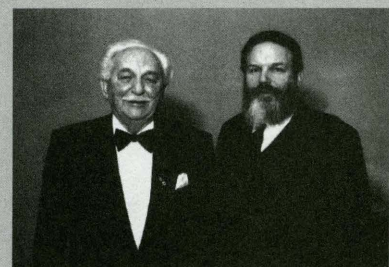
He made a living in small business enterprises until he became a successful real estate developer, first with Block Brothers and then with his own company. He was noted for his humility, his contributions to the Jewish community and his work as an anonymous philanthropist. He died in 2003, survived by his wife, two sons, a daughter, and seven grandchildren.

*Special appreciation to Allan Levine who wrote the new introduction to 'No Time To Mourn'. Allan Levine is a historian and writer based in Winnipeg. He is the author of eight books including, 'Fugitives of the Forest: The Heroic Story of Jewish Resistance of Survival During World War II' that won the 1999 Canadian Yad Vashem Prize for Holocaust History.*



**The Wosk Publishing Program** was established in 2002 through the vision and generosity of Morris J. Wosk z'l and Yosef Wosk. The first publication was, *From Bialystok to Birkenau*.

The Publishing of *No Time To Mourn* marks an important milestone in the continued growth of the VHEC Wosk Publishing Program.





# The Gurs Haggadah: Passover in Perdition

edited by Bella Guterman – Reviewed by John Gort

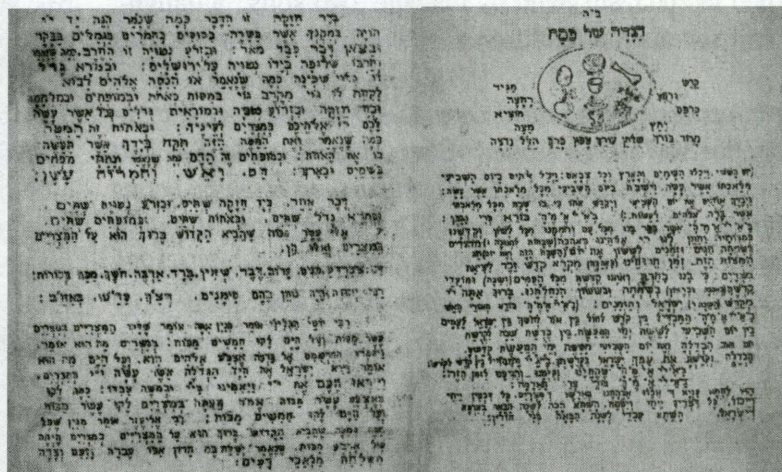
The events described in The Gurs Haggadah took place in the spring and early summer of 1940-1941, shortly after France had been overwhelmed by the armies of Nazi Germany. The Gurs concentration camp was situated in the part of France which was not occupied by the German invaders. It was permitted to conduct its own affairs, led by the collaborationist Government of Henry Phillipe Petain. The many Jews who had sought refuge from the Nazi atrocities in what they confidently hoped to be the safety and freedom of the unoccupied zone of France found themselves cruelly betrayed by Petain's Vichy government, which enthusiastically supported the anti-Jewish policies of their German masters by rounding up all foreign Jews in their zone for detention in the Gurs camp.

Although Gurs was not an extermination camp the internees, among them many children and older people suffering from chronic illnesses, lived under deplorable conditions of semi-starvation, unheated quarters and the constant threat of deportation to the East, which they rightly considered a sentence of death. In spite of the daily misery of their existence, the detainees re-created some of the culture of their former homes in Germany, Belgium and Holland. In their chilly, muddy camp qualified detainees educated and entertained their fellow-inmates with exercise of their skills in music, the arts and the sciences. Most surprising, however, was the rising interest among the camp inmates in the ideals and rituals of the Jewish religion. Many, if not most, of the inmates of Gurs had been thoroughly assimilated into the traditions of their homeland. It was Hitler's Nazis who had aroused in them a new awareness of their Jewish identity. The demand for the Gurs Haggadah was the immediate result

of that new recognition of their cultural roots.

The book details the production of the Gurs Haggadah, which was written completely from memory, without access to any reference material. Under those circumstances the accuracy of the manuscript is truly amazing, as is the ingenuity of the many persons who helped in the preparation of the required number of copies of the work. The story continues with a description of the planning for the seder of the year 5701 (1941), and the celebration of that festival. A startling aspect of the narrative is the display of tolerance by the German Camp commander, who permitted men and women of the camp to celebrate the seder together, in spite of the fact that the camp rules strictly banned social mixing of men and women. The author of the Gurs Haggadah expresses the opinion that the Camp authorities encouraged religious observances in the Camp, in the hope of dampening the feelings of resentment and frustration of the detainees.

The hand-written Gurs Haggadah was carefully pieced together from original material in the possession of Yad Vashem, the renowned Holocaust Museum in Jerusalem with the assistance of survivors of the Gurs Camp. This handsomely produced report of a little-known incident in the history of the Holocaust will reward the reader with a deeper understanding of these tragic times and of the heroic determination by the victims of Nazi hatred and French treachery to survive and maintain their Jewish heritage. The many written and pictorial illustrations of the life of the inmates of Camp Gurs included in this account enhances its value as an important addition to the literature of the Holocaust.





# The Stories of Mottel Menczer

In 2002 Micha Jacob Menczer brought a folio of stories in Yiddish to the VHEC, along with other artifacts relating to his parents. The stories tell of the Holocaust experiences of his father Mottel Eliezer Menczer. It took many hours of painstaking work to translate this material. The stories are rich in literary merit and provide a glimpse of the experiences of one Romanian survivor of Transnistria. The VHEC and the Menczer family are grateful to Sheila Barkusky, David Schaffer and the late Shia Mozer for their work in translating this material into English.

Mottel was born on February 7, 1901 in Storojinet, Bucovina then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He was the youngest member of the family, which included a brother, Simon Menczer, and a sister, Pearl Spiegel, killed by the Nazis in Vienna in 1941. He grew up and attended school in Storojinet. After the First World War, he went to Vienna to study at the Academy of Commerce. Upon completion of his studies he returned to Storojinet (now part of Romania) where he operated a woolen and dry goods store. He became active in the Jewish community during this time. On August 18, 1935 he married Regina Dermer.

In 1940, the Russians occupied Storojinet. They controlled the area until the spring of 1941, when the Nazis seized control and forced all Jewish families into the ghetto. Mottel resided there with his wife and family until the fall of 1941 when together with others from the Jewish community he was deported to Transnistria, first by railway cattle cars and later they walked for five weeks to the ghetto in Bershadt in the Ukraine. Thousands of Jews, including many of his close family and friends died en route and in the camp, which was under the local Romanian administration. Others died from exhaustion, hunger and illnesses such as typhoid.

In the spring of 1944, the Nazis fled abandoning the camp and the survivors were able to leave. The surviving members of the family made their way back to Bucharest, Romania on foot, by wagon cart or any means available. Mottel remained with his wife in Bucharest until 1948 when they sought to immigrate to Canada. They lived in Paris for several months, in 1948, while awaiting permission to enter Canada. In January of 1949 he and his wife arrived in Canada and took up residence in Ottawa.

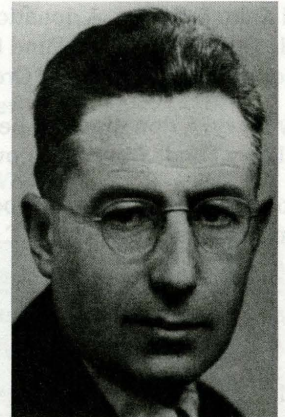
In Ottawa, Mottel worked as a retail salesman and his wife as a bookkeeper. They had one child, Micha Jacob Menczer, born November 8, 1950. In Ottawa, Mottel took

active interest in Jewish affairs and studies. He frequently contributed short stories on concentration camp life to local papers and the *Daily Jewish Journal* in New York City. Mottel passed away at his home in Ottawa on December 23, 1959. His son resides in Vancouver, BC.

## In a Dilapidated House

*Written by survivor*

*Mottel Eliezer Menczer*



*It happened in April 1944. Long rows of people stretched from the liberated camps going towards home. On the way there were already rumors that homes looked like "utter destruction". It was not like the Exodus from Egypt, where they themselves could see the punishment of the guilty. The confidence that the torturers would also be punished, inspired little hope. It is the Passover eve and we are moving towards a village, where we hoped to spend several days. It was one of these villages that "swallowed up," in that bitter winter, masses of Jewish victims.*

*In a partly destroyed "dilapidated house" – three families lived and they welcomed us heartily. In the circumstances where the necessities of Pesach (Passover) were missing, we nevertheless decided to celebrate the Seder of Pesach. We exchanged with our Ukrainian Neighbors, several articles of clothing, for some potatoes and pickled cucumbers, which would be our Passover meal. This time our main concern was the Seder and its observance, rather than the matzo balls!*

*We had a meager light from an improvised candle, and we started reciting the Haggadah. A little boy, impoverished, "skin and bones" asked the "Ma – Nishtana" – the four Questions. There are many questions to be asked, but who will be able to answer? We completed the meager meal, and we continued to recite the prayers. When they read the sentence, "Next year in Jerusalem" it became light in the room. A happy light emanated from the eyes of all, a strong confidence that the prayers would be fulfilled. With a happy heart and an empty stomach, we completed the Seder, which will remain in our memories forever.*

Other Menczer stories will appear in future *Zachors*.



### Donations

Michael, Miriam, and Jack Eisner, A donation to repair and preserve the Memorial Monument has been made in memory of Joe Eisner. Rabbi Yosef Wosk

Hodie Kahn, in honour of Leon Kahn. Morley & Myrna Koffman

Saul Kahn & Family, A donation has been made to the Leon Kahn Fund in your honour. Michael & Mickey Greene

Jocy Lowy, A donation has been made to the Lowy Fund. Steve Chercover

Janos Mate, A donation has been made in memory of your parents. JCC Shalom Dancers.

Lillian Boraks Nemetz, In your honour. L.C.A.

Paul & Edwina Heller, Our best wishes & love. Dr. Carol & Liliana Abraham

### Get Well

Rita Akselrod, Love and best wishes for an easy and speedy recovery. Gerri & Mark London, Betty Mintzberg, David Feldman, Agi & Tibor Bergida, Izzy Fraeme, Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Lili & Izak Folk, Lola Apfelbaum, Louise & Ike Stein Sorensen, Serge & Elinor Haber, Hymie & Fay Davis, The Szajman Family, Chaim & Susie Micner, Helen Berger, Judith Nagy, Susan Bluman, Cathy & David Golden, Rose Lewin, Rose & Ben Folk, Ruth & Cecil Sigal, Sally Zimmerman, Sherie & Odie Kaplan, The Child Survivors

Mrs. Esther Berenbaum, wishing you the quickest recovery in history. Celina Lieberman

Andre Blum, We wish you a speedy recovery. Harold & Bella Silverman, Regina Wertman, Izzy Fraeme

Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Thinking of you. Irene N. Watts

Sandy Dore, Wishing you a speedy recovery and good health from now on. Gloria & Robbie Waisman

Mrs. Edith Hollander, We hope you will be up and walking soon! Gisi & The VHEC Board & Staff.

Shirley Laskin, Best wishes toward a speedy recovery and Happy New Year! Shoshana & Moshe Fidelman

Abe Miedzygorski, Wishing you a speedy recovery. Sam & Sarah Mandelbaum, Art Sam & Al Szajman, Harold & Bella Silverman, Regina Wertman, David Feldman, Izzy Fraeme, Lili & Izak Folk, Chaim & Susie Micner

Mr. Avrum Miller, Wishing you a speedy recovery. The VHEC Board & Staff

Clara Tischler, We wish you a speedy recovery. Sam & Sarah Mandelbaum, Harold & Bella Silverman, Chaim & Susie Micner

Mr. George Wertman, Wishing you an easy & speedy recovery. Gloria, Gerri & Survivor Drop-In

Max Fugman, Celebrating your recovery. Jody & Harvey Dales

### Mazel Tov

Dr. Reva Adler, In honour of your special birthday. Ruth & Cecil Sigal

Ralph Akin, Happy birthday. Ed & Debbie Lewin

Ben Akselrod, on your 83rd Birthday. Mr. Aluminum. Gerri & Mark London

Mr. & Mrs. M. Benyaer, Happy Anniversary! Harry & Resia Nortman

Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Congratulations on being awarded Honour Book for Tapestry of Hope by the Society of School Librarians. The VHEC Board & Staff, Jody & Harvey Dales, Ethel Kofsky

Judy Breuer, With love on your special birthday. Barrie, Ellen, David & Cathy Yackness

Lilian Broca, Congratulations on winning the gold medal in the Bienale! Happy Chanukah. Lillian Boraks Nemetz

Jody Dales, Congratulations on being awarded the Jewish Federation's Young Leadership Award! The VHEC Board & Staff, Ethel Kofsky

Ms. Rosa Ferera, Mazel Tov on your special birthday, Hymie & Fay Davis

Mr. Moshe Fidelman, Happy Birthday! Harry & Resia Nortman

Mr. Izzy Fraeme, Happy Birthday! The VHEC Board & Staff

Edwina Heller, In honour of your 90th Birthday. Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Daeniela & Steve Bheumont Berne, The VHEC Board & Staff, Graham & Judith Forst, Ethel Bellows, Barbara, Michael, Joshua and Sella Heller/Karton, Gloria & Robbie Waisman, Morton & Irene Dodek, Wanda Melamed, Harold & Patricia Laimon, Rob & Marilyn Krell

Mr. & Mrs. Irvine Kates, Mazel Tov on one son's marriage & one son's engagement. Susan Bluman

Alex & Elaine Kliner, Mazel Tov on your 50th wedding anniversary. Stan & Reena Taviss

Dr. & Mrs. Rob & Marilyn Krell, Congratulations on the birth of your grand-daughter Mattea. The VHEC Board & Staff, Jody & Harvey Dales, Allan & Bertie Beiser

Lucien Lieberman, Happy Birthday! Marcy & Leanne Lieberman

Mrs. Rochelle Moss, Wishing you health & happiness in your new home. Celina Lieberman

Irene N. Watts, Congratulations on being awarded Honour Book for Tapestry of Hope by the Society of School Librarians. The VHEC Board & Staff, Ethel Kofsky

Harry Nortman, Best wishes of good health always & happiness on your special birthday. Susan Bluman

Mr. Carl Reisman, In honour of your 80th. Jocy Lowy

Jeffery Shafran, In honour of your Bar Mitzvah. Beyond Sound, Danny Weinstein & Charlotte Berman

Anita Shafran, Mazel Tov on the occasion of Jeffrey's Bar Mitzvah. The VHEC Board & Staff

Marty Charach, Happy 50th birthday. Ed & Debbie Lewin



Mr. Art (Aaron) Szajman, All the best on your 80th Birthday! Sally Zimmerman, Emery Klein, Rachel Wosk

Dr. & Dr. Tischler, Mazel-tov on the birth of your grandson! June & Michel Mielnicki

Karen & Perry Trester, Mazel Tov on your son's engagement. Susan Bluman

Riki Turofsky, Happy 60th Birthday! Graham & Judith Forst

Robbie & Gloria Waisman, In honour of your 45th Wedding Anniversary. Morley & Fay Shafron, The VHEC Board & Staff

Louis Winkler, In honour of your 75th birthday. Kathy Gelmon, Neil & Family, Tom, Cheryl, Alexander and Talya Gelmon

Vera Winkler, Miriam & Daniella Winkler, Happy Birthday. Judith Nagy

## Sympathy

Florence & Allen Attas, Deep sympathy on the passing of your mother, Paula Kominsky. Julie & Henry Gutovich

David Bercovici, In memory of your dear mother, Sarah Bercovici. The VHEC Board & Staff

Donna Cohen & Family, With sympathy on the passing of your husband. Lillian Boraks Nemetz

Esther Comisarow, Deepest sympathy on the loss of your dear husband, Paul, he will be sadly missed. Sarah Hoffman Sair

Mariette & Sidney Doduck, Deepest condolences on the tragic death of your nephew, Marc Rozen. Alex & Colette Buckman, The Child Survivor Group, Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Susan Bluman, Norman & Birgit Gladstone/Westergaard, Karen & Les Cohen, Sarah Sair, Ethel Kofsky, Ben & Rita Akselrod, Rita & Marvin Weintraub, Ruth & Cecil Sigal, Ida Kaplan, Julie & Henry Gutovich

Lil Dworkin & Family, In memory of Alex Dworkin. Ruth & John Campbell

Cathy & David Golden & Family, Our condolences on the loss of your cousin. Les & Karen Cohen & Family, Ethel Kofsky

Harry Harris, Condolences on the passing of your brother. Irvine Wolak, Susan & Joe Stein

Nomi Kaplan, Thinking of you at this time. Lillian Boraks Nemetz, The VHEC Board & Staff, Ruth Kliman

Nomi Kaplan, In loving memory of Nadia Kaplan. Judith Growe

Nomi Kaplan, In honour of Nadia Kaplan. Morley & Myrna Koffman

Rozanne Kipnes, Condolences on the loss of your mother. Susan & Joe Stein & Family

Morris Lank, Condolences on the passing of your beloved daughter. Art, Sam, & Al Szajman

Mrs. Florence Morris, Condolences on the recent loss of your mother. Bella & Morry Marcovitch, Celina Lieberman

Sarah Nider, Sympathy on the loss of Harvey Cohen. Sarah & Sam Mandelbaum, Harold & Bella Silverman

Doreen & Jack Rozen, Our deepest condolences on the tragic death of your son. Alex Buckman, The Child Survivor Group, Lillian Boraks Nemetz, Birgit Westergaard & Norman Gladstone, Izzy Fraeme, June & Michel Mielnicki, Jocy Lowy, Ben & Rita Akselrod, Sid & Sally Coleman

Vera & Bernard Rozen & Family, Sympathy on the loss of your nephew. Sarah Sair

Gordon Stahl, Sympathy on the passing of your mother. Susan Bluman

Yaacov Silbershatz, In memory of your father's Yortzeit. Andy & Joy Rosengarten

Sheldon Stier, Sympathy on the loss of your dear mother. Robbie & Gloria Waisman

## Thank You

Dana Giffen, Thank you for your donation in our honour to the Book in Every Hand Program. Roberta & Hayden Kremer

Mrs. Bronia Sonnenschein, Thank you for sharing your story with us. Roberts Creek Elementary

Stan Taviss, Thank you Stan! From Sandra's Bridge Group

## Memorial Repairs

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Art Szajman

Gina Dimant

Ida Kaplan

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**Donations In Kind:** Starbucks, Olive Press



continued from page 6...



Susan Bluman was born in Warsaw, Poland, and was one of the estimated 6,000 Jews who received a life-saving visa from Japanese Consul Chiune Sugihara. Following the Nazi invasion of Poland in September, 1939 and with Warsaw under constant bombardment, Susan fled to Eastern Poland. In December, Susan, along with her husband, Nathan, became part of the wave of Polish refugees escaping into Lithuania. After arriving in Kovno the Blumans tried without success to get their passports stamped by the Dutch consul for entry into the colony of Curacao. However, even without the Dutch stamp, Susan and her husband still managed to obtain a Japanese transit visa from Chiune Sugihara. They were among the very last refugees to receive the visas before the consulate was shut down and Sugihara was reassigned in late August, 1940. The Blumans traveled across the Trans-Siberian railway and eventually arrived in Japan where they stayed for the next six months. Nathan used his background as an agricultural engineer to obtain one of only 25 visas being issued to professionals for entry into Canada. Just 24 hours before the ship set sail, Susan managed to acquire a visa as well. In 1941, at the age of nineteen, Susan, along with her husband, sailed from Yokohama to Vancouver. She has lived here ever since.

### A Book in Every Hand

We have had a tremendous response to our campaign to give copies of the *Diary of Anne Frank* to thousands of BC students this fall. Thanks to the generous donors listed below we have already sponsored nearly 2,000 books. Please consider supporting this initiative, which will give the gift of insight and understanding to our youth.

A minimum donation of \$100 allows us to give out 20 books. Each book will be inscribed with the name of the donor or a personal dedication. Donations from groups, families and individuals are welcome. For more information call the VHEC at 604-264-0499.

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Dana Giffen  
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Mark Gurvis & Leah Pomerantz  
The VHEC Board of Directors

*The title alone would  
think it was a detective  
would be quite funny  
we Jews were to tell*  
—March 29, 1944

