

child survivors of the holocaust

CONNECTIONS

VOLUME 2 NO.1

MARCH 2014

Introduction



Dear Child Survivors
It was wonderful to meet up with everyone at our end of year luncheon. Recent members Dr. Margit Korn and

Frank Baumann and his sister Rita were warmly greeted. We were delighted our three past Presidents, Dr Paul Valent with his wife Julie, Floris Kalman and Henri Korn, were in the crowd. Founding members attending included Eva Marks with her husband Stan, Dita Gould, and Paulette Goldberg (travelled from Sydney to be with us), Sarah Tamir, Rosa Jankie, Marietta Elliot-Kleerkoper, Danial Kogan.

Danial brought along his beautiful painting "WARPEACE" and Marietta gave us an insight into her poem, inspired by Danial's powerful work.

Time Capsule:

Child survivors of the Holocaust are creating a **Time Capsule** to commemorate the history of Child Survivors in Melbourne. This time capsule will be sealed for 50 years and reopened in May 2064.

All Child Survivors together with family members, grandchildren and other young friends will be invited to attend the **Closing Ceremony, Sunday 25 May, 2014 at 2.00p.m.** Photos will be taken of all present on 25 May. These pictures will be the last items to be included in the Time Capsule.

It is the sincere wish of all Child Survivors that their young friends and grandchildren will be present with their own young families in May 2064 to witness the **"Closing" Ceremony.**

The Child survivor time capsule will be a testament to all child survivors living and past. The triumphs and the tragedies of these young lives embroiled in the

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Holocaust should never be forgotten or ever doubted.

Information for participants:

We had a very successful meeting on Monday 17 February and many members came along to discuss their contributions. Eva Marks chaired the meeting and had prepared some examples: An A4 page with her childhood photo, a brief outline of her family history and on the back and a picture of her book. The pages were then laminated to protect the finished work.

Child Survivors will create their own individual pages; be it a family tree, a poem, your own story, letters, etc. We ask only that your contribution be no larger than a standard A4 page.

We would appreciate your contributions to the Child Survivor Time Capsule being delivered to the Jewish Holocaust Centre, 13-15 Selwyn Street, Elsternwick, during **the first week of April**. There will a form to be signed at Reception. Items delivered after Friday 4 April unless by prior arrangement, will miss out.

Please provide **copies** of precious photos and letters etc. All items contributed to the **Time Capsule** will become the property of the Jewish Holocaust Centre. Phone: Viv 9826 9248 or Eva Marks 9578 6697 for assistance.

Viv Parry
Chairperson, CSH Melbourne

A Glimmer of Light in the Darkness



Anne Bayer today.

I was born in March 1938, in Katowice, Poland, war was declared in September 1939 – my parents who had been unwilling to leave behind their beautiful house, their friends, their present lives, decided at long last that it was time to flee our part of Poland and go to somewhere

safer. Unfortunately there was no safety for our people and our car was commandeered by Russian soldiers, yes Stalin and Hitler had signed a sort of friendship pact and we were put on a horse drawn cart in which we travelled the rest of the way to Drohobych, where my mother's sister and her family lived. When we arrived in Drohobych we learnt that my aunt and her family had left but had left keys to her apartment for us with a neighbour - this neighbour was Slawa Wolosianski and her husband Izek, who were eventually responsible for saving our lives and those of many other Jewish people by hiding them in the cellar underneath their apartment and were subsequently named among the "righteous Gentiles" at Yad Vashem. I spent my 4th birthday still "free" but not for long, the Germans arrived and firstly a ghetto was formed and then a Concentration Camp and my next 2 years were spent there. Children were not allowed in the camp, but somehow quite a number managed to survive either by hiding or being "thrown" over the fence at night, this was being done by previous arrangement with Christian friends (this was my own experience which I remember vividly till today), who would then, at great risk to themselves,

keep the child till danger had minimized and the child was returned to the camp by being thrown back, also by arrangement with the parents.

There were many frightening episodes in my life in the camp, but there is one which stands out like a beacon to me, that among all the wickedness that surrounded me almost every hour of every day there was at least one act of kindness which I shall never forget.

One day, I was missing my mother terribly and I decided to go and look for her and so I followed the path that I knew she walked to go to work, this took me to the gates through which she went out. I had barely stuck my head out into the unknown when a man's arm extended towards me, grabbed me and pulled me into the small wooden guardhouse in which he had been standing. In the few seconds that ensued and which I thought were about to be my last, because I saw the insignia of the Ukrainian guards on his sleeve, and if there were degrees of inhumanity in the people that were guarding us – Ukrainian would have been the worst! All this must have been a strange moment for him too, the usual response should have been to kill me on the spot or to wait for his fellow guard in the guard box on the other side, to return from wherever he was and then take me to some greater authority. He didn't kill me, somehow, in answer to my quiet sobs and tears running down my cheeks, this normally brutal man, asked me gently in Polish, my name and how old I was, I told him, what was I doing walking out of the camp, I told him I wanted my mother, he nodded his head and then said to keep quiet because if I made any noise I would be killed.

Time passed, we waited until dark and until his fellow guard had gone off duty and then he put me under his long greatcoat, he motioned I suppose to his arriving replacement and together, we walked awkwardly towards

the room where we lived with another couple.

In the meantime my parents were frantic, they obviously didn't know what had happened to me and then came the knock on the door. I was still within the greatcoat so I didn't see my parents' faces, but I imagine their expression was as if they were seeing the angel of death. Within seconds, which seemed like hours to me, the guard pushed me forward from under the coat and explained what I had done and in answer to the look on my parents' faces, he briefly explained why he had done what he had done, he said that he had a little 5 year old daughter, who looked so very much like Ania (me) and who he hadn't seen for 2 years, he hoped that if she were ever in danger she would also be helped by someone.

The story didn't end there. A couple of months later as winter was upon us and Christmas was nearly there, there was a knock at the door. Any knock on those doors was never a pleasant experience, my father opened it and in came the Ukrainian guard. He asked whether Ania was

there, I was, out of sight. He asked whether he could see me for a moment - I came out, upon which he gave me a small package, "Na Boze Narodzenie" (for Christmas) he said. "Dzienkuje" (Thank you), I said and smiled. He smiled back and left. In the parcel were a pair of woollen gloves, which I wore for a very long time, a mandarin – to this day I haven't worked out how he got a mandarin in Poland in the depth of winter and a small bar of chocolate – these items will forever be placed among the best gifts I have ever received, even more so as they gave me an insight into the good even in what I had previously thought were the wickedest of men.

Anna Bayer



Anne Bayer in 1942.

The *Kindertransport* Statue



Kindertransport – the Arrival (Liverpool Street Station, London) by Frank Meisler.

This sculpture commemorates the arrival of the Kindertransports at Liverpool Street Station in central London, from which the children were sent to foster homes and hostels.

**Contributed by Frank Baumann
who was on the Kindertransport aged 8½ years.**

My Little Suitcase - 51 cm x 76 cm



This story is about coming to Australia to be reunited as a family, my brother Joseph, my sister Celine and me.

We were living in Paris in 1942 when our mother was rounded up by the Nazis and we never saw her again. The French had deported my father back to Poland in 1938 because he didn't have a worker's permit and he also disappeared forever.

We three children were briefly hidden by a Catholic family on the outskirts of Paris, but after a short while they threw us out. Celine and I became separated from Joseph who was twelve. He survived by being taken to a monastery in Paris.

We were not so lucky. For a long time we were living in the street, barely surviving; then the Underground found us and moved us around for the duration of the war. Celine was nine and I was not yet four when our wanderings started. She was my protector, a terrible burden for such a little girl, especially because we were in danger a lot of the time. I am sure I owe her my life.

Now it seemed that we had a chance to build a life together again. Joseph, as the eldest, was asked to make the decision for the three of us. Australia or Canada? His friends suggested that he toss a coin, and that is how our fate was decided. He was the first to leave in 1947, he arrived in Brisbane. At the time, I was in the O.S.E. Children's Home in Taverny outside Paris. (Evre de Secours aux Enfants – the Society to Save Children).

The three of us had been put in different homes according to age. One day, I was told to catch the Metro for three or four stops and find the Central O.S.E. office. One of the Directors wanted to talk to me. He showed me a big map on the wall and pointed to one place on it. "This is Paris where you are now" he said. And then he moved his hand right across it and said "This is Australia and you and your sister are going to join your brother there, so you can live together and be very happy".

I was then moved to Versailles to the children's home where Celine was living. It was on the 22nd of June 1949. I remember the month; I was there for two reasons. One was celebrating Succoth with the big boys and girls, building a big Succah and hanging all the fruits from the top. The second memory is not such a good one. I learnt to swim by being thrown into a pool in the deep end.

Some of the big boys were supposed to be teaching us how to swim. I don't understand how I ever surfaced and managed to paddle my way out. I was so scared.

We had an uncle and his family in Paris but they were unable to look after three extra children. This Uncle Marcel was the one who took us to the train station to begin our journey. We said our goodbyes and travelled first to Rotterdam in Holland. We were to spend one night in a hotel there before boarding our boat to Australia. We arrived in the late afternoon and went for a walk to look at the city. It was nearly Christmas and there were many beautiful decorations up. We had never seen any before. Then it got pitch dark and we realized we had forgotten where our hotel was. We didn't know what it was called so we went from hotel to hotel till we finally found it.

It was the 14th December 1949 when we boarded our boat called the "Volendam". Celine was very unhappy and so was I. We wanted to be with our friends, most of whom were going to Israel but we hadn't been given the right to choose. There were twelve hundred and ninety five passengers. It still had big guns on the deck, but I don't know who had used them during the war. I was sea sick a lot. We lived on lots of dry bread and hard boiled eggs, because we would only eat Kosher. It took us a while to find the Rabbi who had been given food for us. He certainly didn't come looking for us.

I learnt a lot on this trip. Once I cleaned my white sandals and put them outside the cabin to dry and they were gone within ten minutes. I soon learnt to put everything away, clean or dirty in my little suitcase 51 cm x 76 cm. Many languages were spoken on board. Dutch, Polish, Hungarian, German and Yiddish, but very few people spoke or understood French.

When we left France, we were told that we would be so happy in Australia, a safe faraway country; that we would be a family again. It never happened. Celine and I were parted and I didn't even know where Joseph lived. Celine went to work and as I was twelve, I lived with my guardians, a kind elderly German Jewish couple, Fritz and Freidl Kohnke. At first their German language had me in terror. I was sure for the first weeks that they would kill me once I was asleep.

I was sent to school to learn English. I was so unhappy and I retreated into another world of my own, roaming the streets as I had in France, not turning up for school. Everything and everyone was different. I was searching for happiness that had been promised us in Paris but it wasn't there. I felt so alone. Living as a Jew was also very different. Celine and I went by tram to synagogue but

nobody spoke to us there. The war never ended for me even though I was told to forget my experiences and never talk about them, never to talk in French not even to Celine. Forget it all, just think it never happened. Start a new life and imagine that you are reborn.

In 1954 when I was sixteen I came down to Melbourne with all my possessions in my little suitcase 51 cms x 76 cms. So another start, this time in Melbourne. My sister and I shared a room in St Kilda. I was so happy being with just her! It was always hard to be with strangers but at last I wasn't pointed at as the "orphan". It was hard to find work but we did. Celine was employed at Le Louvre - High Class Couture - because she was a brilliant seamstress and after a while she got me a job there too. We lived mostly on my sister's wages Mine were very small. We shopped at the Prahran Market at closing time, when the food was cheap. Celine budgeted for the rent and tram fares. The little that was left went on food. So even in Melbourne in our early years, we didn't have enough to eat. None of our friends knew, because we were too proud to tell them.

We did have good meals and just as important acceptance at the homes of some wonderful people who became our family. Although it is nearly fifty years later and my circumstances are so different, I will never forget their warmth and kindness. I must mention them by name Esther and David Hertan, Pearl and Fred Meadows and Sarah and Hymie Wein. How often we sat at their tables on Shabbat and Yom Tov. For the first time in my life I began to feel part of a community and beautiful memories began to take the place of the bad ones.

We grew up on our own with no guidance I don't think we even knew then to bring a bunch of flowers. I was so distressed in those early years I wanted to distance myself from my past to cut it off, but for a long time I couldn't. It was difficult to be Jewish, to be in the center of things.



Paulette Goldberg (front left) together with her siblings.

We had carried our Jewishness for years in secret and in loneliness. We had missed playing and hugging and feeling safe, the things we now saw in these homes in Melbourne that opened their doors to us. They showed me what family life was, and I tried to learn from others.

Ten years ago, I twice retraced the zig zag journey my sister and I made in wartime France. I went for three months and then for five months. Celine helped me, since my memories are fragmented due to having been so little at the time and so afraid.

Making sense of the past has not healed all wounds but it has allowed me to live much more happily in the present, to enjoy life with my husband, children and three treasured grandchildren.

Paulette Goldberg



Children dancing before the war.

My Story; My Life

Once upon a time there was a little Jewish girl called Tetta, with blond curls. If her curls had been a couple of shades darker, she might not have lived. The officer who found her playing in the street might have made a different decision. Her mother had said to her and her sister, Elly: 'This nice lady is going to take you to the park to play. I'll be back soon.' And she had left without a backward glance.

Tetta was taken to a place far from her home. A strange house with a family of blond people. A lot blonder than she was, with straight yellow hair. The lady disappeared and she was left with these people. How long is 'soon'? It seems to be a very long time. So long that she almost forgot she had another home, another family.

Sometimes 'Auntie', as she called the mother of the other two girls, would tell her she had to go into the cellar. This was a black room at the bottom of some steps. She didn't understand why she had to go into the cellar. Perhaps because she had been naughty. Let me out, let me out, I'll be good now! Whatever I did, I won't do it again!

'Uncle' read from a big book, called a 'bible', every night. He said Jews were 'sinners' and 'infidels' and one day, when the Revelation came, there would be no more Jews and everyone would be Christian. Jew, what's that? Am I one?

Elly was staying at a different house, but on Sundays they were allowed to play together. On Elly's birthday they all went to a park to play and had ice cream. Tetta could not remember tasting anything so delicious. As she was playing she saw a woman hiding behind a bush. This woman looked just like her mother, but her mother had gone. Who is this woman? My mother? Why can't I go home with her? Then she decided to forget about the woman and chase her ball.

One morning when she woke up she heard people shouting and laughing in the street. Every house had an orange flag flapping in the wind. What's going on? Why is everyone so happy?

You can view a video of Marietta Elliott-Kleerkoper and Sara Robenstone called "The Things That Nana Remembers" made by their grandchildren, Adam Ricco and Greta Robenstone.

<http://vimeo.com/78444363>



Marietta with her sister Elly during the war.

Soon after this day a woman came on a bicycle. She said she was Tetta's mother and had come to take Tetta back to live with her now that the war had ended. So that's my mother. Do I want to go and live with her? I've got used to being here now.

But of course she had no choice, so they went, not to their old home, but to a new home in Amsterdam. Other family members returned from camps and hiding places and came to live with them. Thirteen people living in one flat, every night felt like a party. And then they celebrated Chanukkah and Pesach. Why is this night different from other nights?

Tetta and Elly's father appeared. He had been fighting with the army. What's he doing here? Do we need him? Soon after, he and Mother decided they would all go to Australia. Oh no! Not another move! And what about my friends Olga and Rudy? We planned to get married! They boarded a huge ship, the 'Volendam,' and six weeks later arrived in a hot and dry place, where she did not understand the language. The children at this school are so rude.

And you know the rest. Tetta became Marietta, went on to study at University, teach, marry, have children, divorce, complete a Ph. D and write poetry.

And the cellar? I carry it within myself. The cellar is a dark place, but it is also a place of inspiration.

Marietta Elliott-Kleerkoper



Cellar

*Since I was five
I have been writing the cellar*

*How the light-beam
from the grille at street level*

*struck the dust motes
the way they danced*

How the shadow of the grille

created a pattern on the stone floor

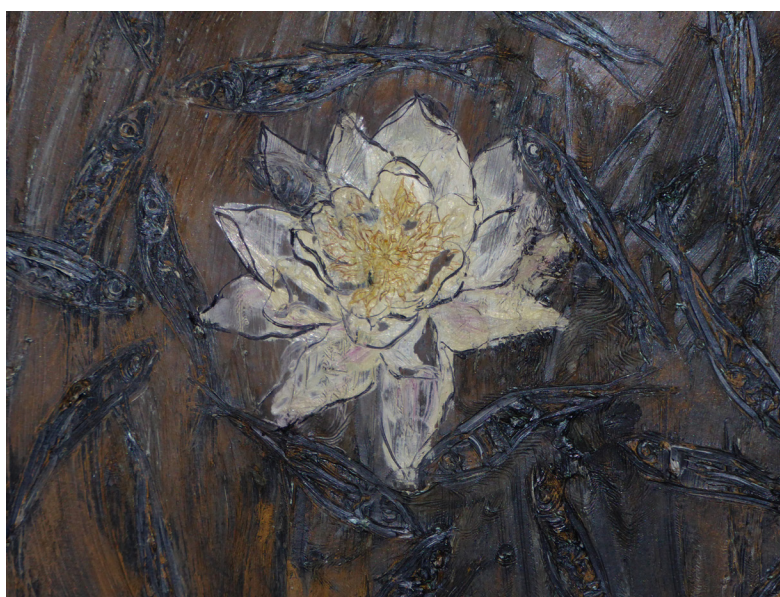
*How the intensity of light
made the darkness darker*

*How if I stood in the light
it illuminated my hand*

and darkness became an absence.

Marietta Elliott-Kleerkoper

Waterlily - the painting



Waterlily - a painting by Danial Kogan for Elliott-Kleerkoper's 60th birthday

Waterlily

For Danial

*Ceci n'est pas un poème, dear friend
I'm trying to wrestle a poem for your 70th*

*about the painting you made me
15 years ago for my 60th*

*how I've looked into its eyes again
to remind me of its message*

*There's a water-lily surrounded by
a dark lake*

*a lily past her prime – bearing scars
but retaining a certain beauty*

*and if you stare into its depths
you'll see*

*eyes – benign little eyes looking back at you
eyes of little fishes. They'll nourish you*

*as long as you have eyes
to see*

Marietta Elliott-Kleerkoper

Upcoming Events at the Jewish Holocaust Centre

Thursday 13 March

JHC Social Club

Phillip Brady

55 Years in Television and Radio

Time: 11.15am

Enquiries: 9528 1985 or admin@jhc.org.au

Sunday 16 March

Book Launch

Dr Adam Brown

in conversation with

Dr Mirna Cicioni

Judging 'Privileged' Jews: Holocaust Ethics, Representation And The 'Grey Zone'.

Time: 2.00pm

Enquiries: 9528 1985 or admin@jhc.org.au

Thursday 20 March

JHC Film Club/Holocaust Film Series

The Jewish Cardinal (2012) 90 mins

followed by presentation by **Dr Julian Novitz**

at the Jewish Holocaust Centre

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Classic Cinema

9 Gordon Street, Elsternwick

Ticketing: Tickets are available online from

[Classic Cinemas](http://ClassicCinemas.com), over the phone,

and at the cinema box office.

Enquiries: jiff.com.au/hfs

Thursday 27 March

JHC Film Club/Holocaust Film Series

When Day Breaks (Kad Svane Dan) (2012) 90 mins

followed by presentation by **Jemma Hefter**,

PhD student in Cultural Studies

(Melbourne University)

at the Jewish Holocaust Centre

Time: 7.00pm

Venue: Classic Cinema

9 Gordon Street, Elsternwick

Ticketing: Tickets are available online from

[Classic Cinemas](http://ClassicCinemas.com), over the phone,

and at the cinema box office.

Enquiries: jiff.com.au/hfs

April 1 - 7

**Time Capsule contributions
to be delivered to the JHC.**

Sunday 25 May

Closing Ceremony for Child Survivors Group

'Time Capsule'

Time: 2.00pm

Venue: Jewish Holocaust Centre

Enquiries: Viv 9826 9248 or Eva Marks 9578 6697 or

childsurivors@jhc.org.au

Sunday 22 June

Indigenous 'Smoking Ceremony'

Time: 10.30am

Buffet brunch to be served

Enquiries: 9528 1985 or admin@jhc.org.au

News from NAHOS

NAHOS (National Association of Jewish Child Holocaust Survivors USA)

Italy: During a meeting at the Vatican with a group of Jewish Community leaders which included the chief Rabbi of Rome, the president of the Jewish community of Rome, and the president of the Union of the Italian Jewish Communities, Pope Francis told the assembled: "Christianity and anti-Semitism are incompatible" and "let anti-Semitism be banned from the heart and the life of every man and every woman".

The pope hosted his close friend Rabbi Abraham Skorka for several days at his Vatican residence.

The "Vatican Insider" newspaper wrote: "Never before in the history of Christian-Jewish relations have a Pope and a Rabbi celebrated their friendship by living in the Vatican together for several days, sharing meals including two Jewish festivals and the Sabbath at which the Rabbi said prayers in Hebrew, and discussing what more they can do together to promote dialogue and peace in the world."

December 2013 – January 2014

Photos from our last function



Paul Grinwald, Sonia Hornstein and Sarah Tamir.



Stan Marks, Paulette Goldberg and Dita Gould.



Marietta Elliott-Kleerkoper, Ann Schipperheyn and Henri Korn.



Dr Paul Valent and Danial Kogan.

Have your say

We welcome Child Survivor / Holocaust-related articles, comments or questions.

If you would like to contribute your story for "My Life... My Story" section, please note that it can be no longer than 600

words. Articles for "Aftermath/Tales from my suitcase" - between 600 to 1,000 words, gratefully accepted.

Send to: viv.parry@bigpond.com or 0419 819 131.

Personal Notices

Best Wishes and Congratulations

Floris Kalman celebrating a special Birthday this year, as is Sarah Tamir.

Caring Thoughts

Henry Buch for a speedy recovery, ongoing.