

child survivors of the holocaust

CONNECTIONS

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Dear Child Survivors of the Holocaust, We trust you are well and managing as best you can in these challenging times. Who would have thought since our last edition here we are again back in lockdown (writing this letter, late July). I am not a big fan

of Zoom meetings and when I am invited to join in, I do hesitate; technology is not one of my strong points. Often the discussion turns to how much everyone is missing the football, dining out, retail therapy and of course visits from friends and family. I can see myself in the little square on the screen starting to look like someone who is about to launch into a speech... and then I do just that! I asked "Do you have any idea what Child Survivors went through during the Holocaust? What do you know about the child survivors who were fortunate enough to land in Australia with and without families, arriving with nothing, zero? No language, no money, no extended government support? Against all the odds Child Survivors and their surviving family members carved out lives for themselves in turn creating future generations who benefited by receiving the type of education Child Survivors could only dream about. Hard work and getting on with providing

the necessities of life, was the only magic formula". It seems my words are appreciated. I have been told the Child Survivors' history does present a "different perspective" to this pandemic; as it should.

We invited some of our child survivor members to write in and tell us how they are going and reflect on what is important in their lives at this time; a big thank you to all our contributors. If you would like to email me, Viv Parry at viv.parry@bigpond.com I would be really pleased to receive your contribution for our next edition. If you have changed your email address or contact phone number please let Lena know lena@lenafiszman.com.au. To any of our Child Survivor members who are going through difficult times right now be it health concerns or other please know you are in our thoughts as you always will be; we wish you well, speedily and soon. Lena and I wish you and yours Le Shana Tova! We are still over 265 Child survivor members strong here in Melbourne, let's send out a big warm hug to each and every one.



Kindest regards, Viv and Lena.

From Lena's Desk

The following is article about the 'Dunera' exhibition in Tatura, which highlights the artwork of the late Paul

Mezulianik who was interned as an 'Enemy Alien' along with 2,000 other 'Dunera Boys' in 1940.

The secret artwork of a former 'Dunera Boy' shipped to Australian internship camp in WWII

The secret artwork of a 19-year-old man who was one of thousands of mostly German and Austrian refugees sent to internment camps in Australia during the 1940s is being displayed in north-east Victoria.

Paul Mezulianik, along with about 2,000 others, was shipped on board the British passenger ship the Dunera after being designated an "Enemy Alien" by the British government in 1940.

They were interned in camps in rural areas of Australia but released when no longer seen as a threat. Most, but not all, were Jewish.

It was not until about the time of Mezulianik's death in



Many artworks created by Paul Mezulianik during the war are on display at the Tatura Irrigation and Wartime Camp Museum. (Supplied: Michelle Frenkel)



The Dunera set sail for Australia in May 1940 carrying 2,000 men bound for internment. (ABC Radio National)

2019 that more than 250 pieces of artwork that he had created during the war were found by his step-daughter, hidden in his attic.

Pieces from the collection will be displayed at the Tatura Irrigation and Wartime Camp Museum as part of a three-month exhibition to mark the 81st anniversary of the "Dunera Boys" landing at Tatura.

Monash University Adjunct Fellow Seumas Spark said one of the "myths" about the Dunera story was that most of the men stayed in Australia.

Dr Spark said only about one in three of the 2,000 men remained in Australia.

Mezulianik returned to Britain during the war where he established his life and career and he kept his artwork a secret for the rest of his life.



A group of "Dunera Boys" after arriving in Australia in the 1940s. (Supplied: Friends of the Dunera Boys)

"He has never told his wife or his second wife, his children or his stepchildren about the artwork," Dr Spark said.

"There is about 250 pieces in the collection of beautiful art mostly sketches of studies of human bodies, human form."

By the time the artwork was discovered, Mezulianik was suffering from dementia and his family was unable to ask him about it.

"His step-daughter was kind enough to send all the art to me and some of it will be on display," Dr Spark said.

"The significance of the art, is that we know Mr Mezulianik, in camp at Tatura, was taught by an artist called Robert Hoffman who was one of Europe's finest exponents of portraiture."

Dr Spark said by May 1940, when the war started to look very grim for the Allies and for Britain, Winston Churchill and his government interned these men for fear there were spies among them and they were deported to the edges of the British Empire.

"The Dunera brought those men to Australia. They were treated appallingly," he said.

"The Dunera episode is something of a stain on Britain's wartime history. Churchill and his government later apologised for their treatment."

Dr Spark said by the time the ship had reached Australia there was an acceptance that a mistake had been made and slowly the men were released but the damage had been done.

One man took his life during the journey while another man was killed in a fistfight.

"A number of men suffered mental breakdowns," Dr Spark said.

"It is a tricky point to discuss though because many of these men were treated appallingly."

Despite this, Dr Spark said many of the interned men felt they were in better circumstances than their European counterparts.

"A lot of them will take the position that 57 days on the Dunera was much better than a concentration camp in Europe," he said.

"So it is something that some Dunera people are reluctant to discuss or to see themselves as victims in any way."



Mezulianik's sketches were found hidden in his home by his step-daughter around the time of his death. (Image supplied: Michelle Frenkel)

**By Ashlee Aldridge and Sandra Moon
ABC Goulburn Murray**

Shana Tova from the Jewish Holocaust Centre

Dear Child Survivors,

We wish you all a very happy and healthy new year!

Survivors such as yourselves continue to teach us much about resilience and coping in adversity. These are challenging times for us all and it is so important to have connection. The Child Survivors group is a wonderful forum for connection, to know there are like-minded friends to lean on and interact with.

We are committed to continuing to support you – creating an [online home](#) for you, supporting this publication and providing a venue for all your meetings (when possible). We will work with Viv Parry to identify opportunities ongoing,

We continue to welcome child survivors as speakers in our program – Gilah Leder, Peter Gaspar, Bep Gomperts and Charles German have recently begun speaking to students. They join other child survivors who have been working with us for many years such as Viv Spiegel, Paul Grinwald, John Lamovie and Henri Korn.

In these tough times, there is inspiration to be found in [Phillip Maisel's memoir, *The Keeper of Miracles*](#), filled with his positive outlook on life. He writes, 'Once you begin to look for the miracles in your life, you cannot stop finding them.' He goes on, 'Every time my life was



Child Survivor JHC Guide, Viv Spiegel giving her testimony to school students using the new technology.

saved, it was because someone went out of their way to help me in my hour of need...Every 'miracle' I have experienced boils down to one thing – a human being, making a decision to reject hatred and fear, reaching out to help another, to save a life. I owe my life to these miracles. So does every survivor I have had the privilege of sitting with and listening to.'

On behalf of everyone at JHC, I wish you and your families good health and *Shana Tova*! We look forward to welcoming you in person to our new home in 2022.

Jayne Josem
Museum Director & CEO

Letters from Child Survivors

Dita Gould

The 6 things that impressed me most:

When I was a 16 year old girl a year after I came to Australia, the only day I didn't work was Saturday. I would get off at Flinders Street Station to walk up Swanston Street.

Almost the first shop after Young & Jacksons, there was a new sensation - DOWNYFLAKES. There was a machine and doughnuts popped out.

On the wall was a poem and part of it said "In life always look at the doughnut not the hole."

A few years ago after I met Victor Pertion of the Centre of Optimism, he told me I was the most optimistic person he had met. That's when I realised that by never thinking negatively I survived the Holocaust.

Paul Valent organised us into a Child Survivors of the Holocaust Group.

Till then I always thought only our parents suffered.

Hearing the other members' similar stories made us able to connect and with Paul's help we let go.

Now that I have finished writing my life story I am content.

Bringing it to many - if I help only one person I am satisfied.

Coming from a time when women didn't work, the fact that I became an important art dealer is a feather in my cap.

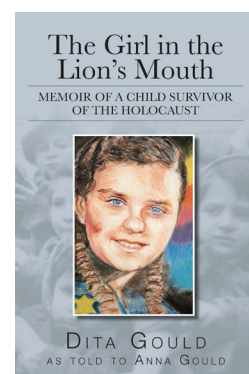
Reading the inspirational book about Isi Leibler takes me back to the time of our troubles, such as university students' fees being used to bring radical Arab

speakers to Australia. Trying to get Russian Jews out! It took 30 years. He never gave up till he succeeded. I want to carry on with my own charity work. At the moment my endeavours lean towards employing someone to write to the media about our side of the story in Israel. Aren't we a Western society?

On a positive note, restrictions are easing and looking forward to a Happy New Year,

May we all be able to Celebrate with family & friends!

Dita



Joe De Haan

Viv asked me for six lines about how I am at this time and what is important to me, here are my thoughts:

The last eighteen plus months have surely been horrific for all of us, but I'm doing fine. With the great support from my Family and friends.

Spending eighteen months in hiding on farms in Friesland during the second world war was like entering paradise.

The loss of my father, brother and so many other uncles and aunts in the Holocaust left a deep impact on my life missing all dear to me.

Being alone after the liberation was certainly one of the

hardest times in my life.

Getting married in 1941 was certainly the highlight of my life, blessed with a son Michael and daughter Judy.

I herewith send my best wishes Le Shana Tovah! For everyone connected to the Child Survivor Group. Stay safe!

Best wishes

Joe



Sarah Saaroni



I am writing to let you know how I am going at this time. Lockdown or no lockdown I am usually at home. I love to exercise and when I can I swim for one hour nonstop at my local pool in Hawthorn. If I can't go swimming I spend one hour on my exercise bike. I love to be out

in my garden keeping it under control. I grow spinach and kale and make sure I eat spinach every day.

I have learned to use zoom on my computer and keep in touch with my children, grandchildren and five great grandchildren. Every Wednesday the JHC arranges for me to speak to school children on zoom, on one

lockdown occasion the children were all at home.

This week I joined a zoom catch up with a Rabbi who speaks with a global Christian organization, Southern Cross Alliance. A short film of my life story was shown and then I answered questions. It was very interesting to meet people from all over the world. I was surprised how many people asked questions about my sculptures, they seemed to appreciate my work.

Wishing a happy New Year to all Child Survivors and I hope this virus disappears and we can all be back to normal and see each other again.

Warm regards

Sarah

Ena Lewis-Krant

This month, a Holocaust writer from Amsterdam phoned me to ask if I would like to tell my story about my Holocaust experience and how I survived.

The writer was doing some research and my name popped up. She wanted to know more because my story [as many of you have] is an unbelievable one!

Reading my story to her for more than an hour an idea came to my mind about putting my story into a book form; written in English and Dutch. But one piece of my life puzzle was missing I didn't know how or what happened!

I met Constance Koster-Fernhout about eight years ago when she was asking child survivors if they were in a certain orphanage in Amsterdam. I did not know, but upon visiting her with photos and facts, it was her! Constance saved me, 100% correct!

Now my puzzle is complete!

Wishing you all, Shana Tova.

Ena



Ena at the age of 2 - five weeks before going to an orphanage and now at 79 years of age.

Gary Fabian

The "Times of Covid" have caused disruptions to our lives and restricted activities, some to a major or minor extend. Much of our daily lives seemed to revolve around ZOOM meetings but keeping up our involvement and serving the voluntary community causes that most of us relate to, are very important obligations to maintain. We survivors who were given the gift of life must bear the obligation to give back to our community, which those who perished are unable to do.

Wishing everyone, L'Shana Tovah for 5782 and well over the Fast. May it be a year of health, peace, and a return to a semblance of normality when we are free again to meet face to face and enjoy each other's company.

Regards,

Gary



Paul Valent



Julie and I are excited. We are moving into a new apartment. Twenty years ago we downsized and moved into a house we have loved and still do. We were going to see our days out here, the two of us, visited by our children and grandchildren. But something

strange started to happen and it took us a long time to realise that we were outgrowing our house, or really, it was outgrowing us. We needed to downsize again. What,

in our eighties?! Go through all the stress of a major move?!

We love the new apartment.

And here is something to think about. My study on the fifth floor will have a wonderful vista of a huge park. I was born on the fifth floor of an apartment building with a wonderful view. (Dunajska ulica, Bratislava Slovakia) I was surrounded by love, before all the troubles began.

All the best,

Paul

Dr Tony Weldon OAM FRACP, Courage to Care

Despite the disappointment and frustration that lockdowns due to COVID create, the enthusiasm of our volunteers and staff remains. We had to cancel programs but these were immediately rearranged with new dates and serves as testimony to the value that is placed on them. Feedback from schools we have visited or planned to visit recently confirms this:

"It doesn't take much to change someone's life. Just one

act of kindness or action is enough." Year 8 student St. Joseph's College Geelong.

"I am very pleased to hear this program is still on the agenda even it must be next year now." Kerang, Technical High School.

On behalf of all involved with B'nai B'rith Courage to Care (Vic.) we wish all Shana Tova!

Tony



Courage to Care Volunteers

Ruth Herschtal

Here we are with the New Year almost upon us. It seems to me that every year passes faster than the last. Let us hope the coming year will be better than the last two years. What kept me going during those days of lockdown, was gardening. I did a lot of propagating and that was very rewarding and kept me busy. My garden looks best in Spring, it is full of colour, so pleasing to the eye. One of my favourite places to visit is the Melbourne Botanical Gardens such beauty, my favourite is the fern garden.

May you all be blessed with good health, happiness and fulfilment!

Shana Tova

Ruth



Renata Schnall reflects on Rosh Hashana approaching and her Child Survivor mother, Danka



Danka Schnall

How could I imagine the significance of family and food to my little mother during Rosh Hashana. Harrowing osteoarthritic knees, cavernous heartbreak from overwhelming loss & indefatigable love for her children and grandchildren were the obstacles and motivators for my mother's giving heart.

Rosh Hashana was the time of year Mum was most aware of what she had lost and what she was grateful for. What she had forgotten but so much wanted to remember and what she had remembered but so desperately wanted to forget.

This is the time of year I also recount what I have lost and what I'm grateful for. You are one of those. Thank you, Mum.

Renata



*To all Child Survivors
wishing you all the best
for the New Year
from
Viv and Lena*