## Centre News

April 2017

Jewish Holocaust Centre



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On the cover:

(I-r) Irma Hanner, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN (Ret'd), and Dr Brendan Nelson at the launch of the gallery 'The Holocaust: Witnesses and Survivors' at the Australian War Memorial Canberra in November 2016

Photo: Fiona Silsby

This publication has been designed and produced by Izigraphics Pty Ltd www.izigraphics.com.au

The Jewish Holocaust Centre is dedicated to the memory of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945.

We consider the finest memorial to all victims of racist policies to be an educational program which aims to combat antisemitism, racism and prejudice in the community and fosters understanding between people.

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## FROM THE PRESIDENTS PAULINE ROCKMAN OAM & SUE HAMPEL OAM

There have been many highlights at the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) over the past few months. Our resourceful editor Ruth Mushin does a fantastic job in giving you both an overview and some in-depth reporting of these events in the bi-annual editions of *Centre News*.

During the year, we bade farewell to two long-serving and stellar Board members, Goldie Birch and Viv Parry. Goldie, as president of the Friends of the JHC, organised many great events, and Viv, president of the Child Survivors Group, revitalised the group with her dynamic and positive energy.

A very special event for all of us at the JHC was the launch of the permanent display on the Holocaust at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra in November. Our curator and head of collections Jayne Josem and archivist Dr Anna Hirsh coordinated the display using material from the JHC's extensive collection. Dr Brendan Nelson, director of the AWM, launched this important exhibition with high praise for the JHC. We felt so proud of the work we are undertaking, and it was fantastic to be represented by three of our survivors, Irma Hanner, who addressed the audience, and Cesia and Abram Goldberg OAM.

Jayne and Anna also worked with the Melbourne University Faculty of Architecture and provided wonderful archival material about the eminent architect Ernest Fooks for a project conducted by architecture students and a fantastic exhibition of their work held in Fooks's home. Both these initiatives are featured in this edition of *Centre News*.

The breadth of the JHC's work never ceases to amaze us. We had a visit from a young man who works at a suburban sports' club with quite a large Jewish membership whose directors decided that he should visit the JHC following a series of antisemitic comments. The visit certainly had an impact and its effects, together with appropriate discussion, cannot be underestimated. This is just one important component of the education process facilitated by our education department, ably led by Education Director Lisa Phillips.

EDITOR'S NOTE RUTH MUSHIN



What do you think of when you see the words 'Head of Collections' and 'Archivist' on the inside front cover of this magazine? Most of us think of the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) museum and archives department, but did you know the extent of the Centre's work with outside bodies to develop other exhibitions and further research? This work is highlighted in two articles: Jayne Josem's overview of the launch of new Holocaust Gallery at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra, and Catherine Townsend's article about Dr Ernest Fooks, the celebrated Viennese architect, designer and artist who fled Europe and came to Australia in 1938. The Holocaust exhibition in Canberra was

We were privileged to be addressed by Professor Philippe Sands, international lawyer and professor from London University. His extraordinary book, *East West Street*, should be compulsory reading. Raphael Lemkin, Hersch Lauterpacht and the city of Lviv form the backdrop to this historical treatise on the Holocaust, interwoven with the author's family story.

Australian delegates were again represented in lasi, Romania at the November Plenary of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA). United Nations International Holocaust Remembrance Day was held in January, hosted by the JHC and the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV). Hungarian Holocaust survivor Baba Schwartz gave a moving testimony and a candle-lighting ceremony was held to commemorate the Holocaust and other genocides. Former Australian Ambassador to Germany, David Ritchie, also addressed the audience about the IHRA.

Together with the Hon Michael Danby, Member for Melbourne Ports, and Elwood Shule, the JHC co-sponsored an event to mark 75 years since the Wannsee Conference, a significant event in the historical timeline of the Shoah. Speakers included Sam Lipski, Gerard Henderson and Rabbi James Kennard.

In conclusion we quote Professor Yehuda Bauer's address at the IHRA Plenary:

It is time the international community really started making its members aware of the importance of abiding by their responsibilities. Statesmen should closely cooperate with scholars and experts to this purpose. This is necessary because without moral outrage and deep moral convictions we are nothing but scoundrels without conscience. But without a constant reality check that will make us understand the politics of this world, we will be fools ... You cannot be motivated without practical directions.

Chag sameach

developed by the AWM working closely with the JHC's Curator Jayne Josem and Archivist Dr Anna Hirsh, while the Fooks article was written as part of a study of Fooks's life and work by Masters students at the University of Melbourne School of Design, some based on material from the JHC archives.

You may also notice the word 'Izigraphics' at the bottom of the second page. Izi and Eti Marmur of Izigraphics have been involved for many years in the design and production of *Centre News*. However, this is to be their last edition as they are retiring. Thank you Izi and Eti for your creative ideas, dedication and friendship.



### DIRECTOR'S CUT WARREN FINEBERG

Last year was a busy and exciting year for the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) and patronage of the Centre's programs again exceeded our staff and physical capacity. In order to continue to develop and expand our programs, the JHC Board has been relentless in pursuing plans to redevelop our building. We are grateful to Phil Lewis and Alan Synman for lending their support and expertise to the building redevelopment groups established to oversee the redevelopment.

Our new website is up and running, providing easier navigation to pages for fundraising, the JHC Foundation, Friends of the JHC and Child Survivors of the Holocaust. This project was funded by the JHC Foundation, Telematics and Child Survivors of the Holocaust. *Collections on Line* improves access to our extensive archive databases, testimony video collections and library catalogue.

As the Centre's Volunteer Honour Board in our auditorium is unable to list all the volunteers at the Centre since its establishment, an interactive digital honour board, funded by Friends of the JHC, has been developed. Located on Level One, it lists all 600 volunteers who have been involved in the Centre.

The JHC Testimony Project team is developing an extensive

collection of Holocaust survivors' eyewitness accounts. To complement these accounts, the Memory Reconstruction project, conducted in 2015, represented survivor stories in the form of collages, and the Custodians of Memory project, undertaken by our guides in conjunction with the Centre's Education Department, partnered guides with survivors to learn their stories and prepare resources so that these stories can be told to students and other museum visitors in the future.

We have put in place security and emergency plans to ensure our Centre operations are restored quickly in the event of an emergency. We are also updating a manual for volunteers, guides and staff members to provide all workers with an overview of the Centre and a brief description of staff roles.

We are delighted that Holocaust survivors Irma Hanner, together with Cesia and Abram Goldberg OAM, joined JHC staff and Board members to attend the opening of *The Holocaust: Witnesses and Survivors*, the new permanent exhibition at the Australian War Memorial. I am grateful to Curator Jayne Josem and Archivist Anna Hirsh for preparing the material for this important exhibition within tight timelines. This exciting initiative is featured elsewhere in this edition of *Centre News*.



EDUCATION LISA PHILLIPS

This year, Victoria has a new State Curriculum, replacing the National Curriculum of the past. Changes to the curriculum include making study of the Holocaust an option at Year 10 History; it is thus no longer mandatory. Further, in Year 11, the VCE Unit 1 Modern History course now has 1939 as the 'end year' of the course, thus excluding the years of the Holocaust. Despite these curricular changes, teachers still value teaching about the Holocaust. At the Victorian English Teachers' annual conference in December 2016, the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) education team was buoyed by the number of teachers who are reintroducing studying the text Night by Elie Wiesel as part of the English curriculum. There are still many other schoolbased opportunities where studying the Holocaust is relevant, particularly in the subject titled 'Civics and Citizenship', and in the 'Ethical' and 'Intercultural' capabilities, taught in every year of secondary school. Our bookings indicate that teachers are keen to continue to bring their students to the JHC.

Behind the scenes we have been busily working on a number of projects including developing new ways to explore the museum; developing new activities to pilot for *the Hide and Seek* program; planning more professional development sessions; and developing the very important Custodians of Memory program. Each of these projects needs to consider

the redevelopment plans for the museum, so we have been working closely with Head of Collections Jayne Josem and the JHC Museum Design Committee.

In July 2016, I presented a paper on *Hide and Seek: Stories of Survival* at a conference at Loughborough University and the National Holocaust Centre in the UK focusing on teaching the Holocaust to primary-age students. The conference was a wonderful opportunity to gain international recognition for our work and achievements. It was also an amazing opportunity to learn from educators and academics working in Holocaust education, particularly the museum educators from Montreal, The Ghetto Fighters' Museum in Israel and the National Holocaust Centre in Laxton, UK. I also had a number of positive meetings with educators at the Weiner Library, the Imperial War Museum, the Holocaust Education Institute and the Jewish Museum in London.

We are delighted to welcome back Anatie Livnat to the JHC education team. We have also welcomed a number of new guides – graduates of the Centre's 2016 Holocaust course – into the JHC guiding group. We anticipate that 2017 will continue to be a busy and productive year.

## Introducing Phil Lewis

Plans for the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) redevelopment are proceeding. I am honoured to be the Appeal Chairperson, and to be a member of the Project Control Group, together with Paul Kegen, Alan Synman, George Umow and Dean Priester.

My connection to this vibrant museum commenced 12 years ago when my wife Sue, daughter of Holocaust survivors, became a volunteer guide at the Centre. I subsequently attended the March of the Living in 2009 with my daughter, Aimee, where the awareness of the importance of remembering the past to make a difference for the future was highlighted.

I have been involved in property development for over 40 years and have been actively involved in the communal activities of our five children. I was president of the AJAX Junior Football Club for five years and have been a member of various committees at Mount Scopus College, including the committee responsible for the building of the Besen Performing Arts' Centre. I have also actively assisted in the construction of two Melbourne synagogues and am currently fundraising for the Royal Children's Hospital.

The JHC Appeal comes at a critical stage in the life of the Centre, as student and visitor numbers have markedly increased over the last five years and, with the second generation taking over the mantle as guides, we need to present the Centre's



message in a way that respects our founders' vision and enhances the Centre's archival and research spaces in the future.

Photo: Phil Lewis

## Recognising the contribution of volunteers





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Members of Melbourne's Jewish community who give of their time unstintingly to the community were recently recognised in the annual JCCV Community Recognition Awards.

The Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) congratulates two volunteers who were recognised for their work: Paul Grinwald for his work with the Centre, and Moshe Fiszman for his work with the Australian Society of Polish Jews and their Descendants.

Photos: 1: (I-r) Paul Grinwald and the Hon Martin Pakula MP 2: (I-r) Moshe Fiszman and the Hon Martin Pakula MP Photographer: Peter Haskin, Australian Jewish News

## **Phillip Maisel Testimonies Project**

The Jewish Holocaust Centre has over 1,300 video testimonies as well as over 200 audio testimonies in its collection. These provide eyewitness accounts of the horrors of the Holocaust, as well as glimpses into the vibrancy of pre-war Jewish life in Europe. The collection is widely used by researchers and students of oral history, the Holocaust and a variety of other disciplines.

If you would like to give your testimony or know of someone who is interested in giving a testimony, contact Phillip Maisel.

Phone: (03) 9528 1985 or email: testimonies@jhc.org.au



## 'The Holocaust: Witnesses and Survivors': a new exhibition at the Australian War Memorial Canberra

Jayne Josem





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On 30 November 2016 Irma Hanner, a Holocaust survivor and museum guide at the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC), took centre stage at the opening of a new Holocaust Gallery, 'The Holocaust: Witnesses and Survivors' at the Australian War Memorial (AWM) in Canberra. This permanent exhibition features artworks by Australian War Artist Lieutenant Alan Moore (1914-2015) and Holocaust survivor Bernard Slawik (1904-1991), alongside artefacts from Holocaust survivors, on loan from the JHC. The personal artefacts humanise and individualise the mostly anonymous faces in Slawik's works, and the images of corpses in Moore's Belsen works. While only a fraction of the experiences of both survivors and victims is presented, displaying these items with the artworks provides a powerful representation of the enormous numbers of lives shattered during the Holocaust.

At the launch, taking place in a museum that presents the horrors of war, Irma Hanner recounted her personal history as a survivor of the Holocaust in graphic detail. Yet here was a history that, up until that moment, had been tragically overlooked. This was a momentous occasion, the culmination of a unique collaboration between the AWM, one of Australia's leading exhibition spaces, and our small museum.

When JHC Education Director Lisa Phillips and I visited the Australian War Memorial in December 2015 we each revisited our disappointment at the lack of information about the Holocaust. Following the moving Last Post Service at the end of the day, Lisa and I met the Memorial's Director, Dr Brendan Nelson, and upon hearing where we worked, he informed us of plans to open a new Holocaust Gallery during the following year. We said that we would be only too happy to assist.

Some months later we received a call and our work began. JHC Archivist, Dr Anna Hirsh, worked tirelessly to locate and prepare items of interest. Curator of Art at the AWM, Warwick Heywood, and Senior Historian, Lachlan Grant, came to Melbourne to see our museum and discuss the project. The timelines were short so it was an intense few months of work, but it was a pleasure to work with the AWM team. They selected items from five collections: Irma Hanner, Cesia and Abram Goldberg OAM, Rosie Bruell, Frank Golding and Arthur and Friderika Matzner.

After months of work preparing the items and documentation, the day of the launch arrived and a number of JHC personnel flew to Canberra, including Holocaust survivors Irma Hanner and Cesia and Abram Goldberg. We were joined by families of survivors Rosie Bruell, Frank Golding and Arthur and Friderika Matzner

During the launch, Dr Nelson noted that it was his initiative to create the gallery, as he had been embarrassed by the lack of material on display about the Holocaust, a most significant event of the Second World War. He added that not everyone agreed with the exhibition.

One regular visitor to the Memorial, he said, told him emphatically that she was opposed to this exhibition. 'It has nothing to do with Australia and the Australian War Memorial,' she said. She told told Dr Nelson that she would never walk through it.

'It has everything to do with us' said Dr Nelson, for we are a part of humankind... We have a responsibility to tell the story of the Holocaust as responsible global citizens with a global outlook.'



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JHC Director Warren Fineberg discussed the importance of having such an exhibition located in Australia's premiere memorial museum and acknowledged the role of everyone who had contributed to it, from the survivors who donated their material to the Jewish Holocaust Centre, to the staff who worked on the exhibition.

Irma Hanner's speech was powerful. She told the harrowing story of how, following a happy childhood in Dresden, Germany, she became a teenager, all alone, in Theresienstadt camp in Czechoslovakia, where she underwent a tonsillectomy without anaesthesia. She concluded by underscoring the importance of Holocaust education and the lessons the Holocaust teaches, which remain as important today as ever:

It shouldn't make any difference - colour creed or religion - we should be tolerant of each other. We can't love each other all the time but we should tolerate each other. And the most important thing: hate is worse than cancer, in my opinion. And hate is, sorry to say, repeating itself today, very much so. The world is in uproar again and it is very dangerous and I think you should be very vigilant. It should not happen here and it is happening here. And I'm very worried about it.

This sentiment was clearly echoed by Dr Nelson who said, 'In this exhibition ... will be found our own sense of morality, to be reminded of the difference between right and wrong and the consequences of allowing currents of political and social thought to head in certain directions.'

Jayne Josem is the JHC Curator and Head of Collections.



1 (I-r) Margaret (Malka) Beadman, Abram Goldberg OAM, Cesia Goldberg and Charlie Goldberg.

2 Dr Brendan Nelson

3 The AWM Holocaust Gallery

4 Irma Hanner and Warren Fineberg Photographer: Fiona Silsby

## Australian Responses to the Holocaust before and during World War Two

#### Konrad Kwiet

In April 1938, following the Anschluss of Austria, a plan was hatched by a prominent Austrian SS leader to 'solve the Jewish Problem'. Ernst Kaltenbrunner, who in 1942 succeeded Reinhard Heydrich as Head of the Reich Security Main Office, and who was sentenced to death in 1946 by the Nuremberg War Crimes Tribunal, proposed a breathtaking resettlement scheme. He did not propagate the old idea of deporting Jews to the island of Madagascar, but proposed the deportation of the world's estimated 20 million Jews to Australia. In return all 'White Australians' would be resettled in Europe and other 'Aryan countries', leaving the Aborigines - termed 'Austral Niggers' behind. The memorandum was sent to Heinrich Himmler. The chief architect of the 'Final Solution' did not respond as he had other plans to remove the Jews and to eradicate the 'Jewish spirit'. Kaltenbrunner's plan was buried in an archival folder of the SS, kept under lock and key until very recently, when I stumbled upon it.

Another document I came across, produced on the eve of Holocaust and kept at the Archive of Judaica in Sydney, is titled Voices of the Past. It is the voice of a British Jew who said:

Australia is so far away from the rest of the world – and its Jewry is less interested in Jewish affairs – than any other I have visited ... Some people are trying to shut the doors to the refugees and, alas, Jews are amongst them. It is a spiritually poor, intellectually poor, nationally poor Jewry, without leaders, and without any feeling of responsibility.

It is easy today in hindsight to criticise the Jewish communities and their leaders, a trend which has gained increasing popularity both in public and academic debate. However justified this criticism might be, one factor is all too frequently overlooked: even if the Jews before and during the Holocaust had overcome their own misgivings, internal disputes and different attitudes, they - like Jewish communities in other countries - were not in a position to solve the refugee problem, far less to prevent the escalating and destructive course of the National Socialist policies of expulsion, deportation and extermination of European Jewry. Jewish protests and rescue efforts met with obstacles mounted by societies around them, and their ineffectiveness, in my view, can be attributed less to those who initiated them than to those who attempted to abort them.

Since the beginning of the European settlement in Australia in 1788 and the subsequent dispossession of the Aborigines, Australia has always been a country of migration – first as a British convict and settler society, then as an outpost of the British Commonwealth, marked by its White Australia Policy and, ultimately, following World War Two, as a multicultural society. What the Australian historian Geoffrey Blainey termed 'the tyranny of distance' has in fact provided a sanctuary for both perpetrators and victims of European persecution and, more recently, for those fleeing from persecution across the globe.

When in 1933 the National Socialists seized power and shattered the German-Jewish 'symbiosis', some Australians – Jews and non-Jews alike - felt obliged to raise their voices in protest.

Perth-based Rabbi Freedman made a personal and passionate appeal to Adolf Hitler to respect the liberty and equality of Jews. His telegram never reached Hitler. It remained unanswered and disappeared into the Archives of German Foreign Affairs, together with hundreds of similar petitions from around the world.

The Australian government distinguished itself with its great reserve. Prime Minister Lyons stated that no Federal or State minister was to give support to any of the protest resolutions, and none of the petitions received was transmitted to the British or German governments. The explanation given was simple: As no Australians were directly involved, Australia was forbidden by international law to intervene in the affairs of another country. This response was maintained during the following years.

After the first protests, Australian Jews retreated into their daily existence. Word continued to reach them that Central European Jews were being excluded from society and forced to leave their countries of birth. Spiritual and lay leaders, institutions and relatives were bombarded with letters seeking landing permits and jobs. Rabbi Falk in Sydney received 91 petitions, and in only ten cases was he able to offer some assistance.

Nowhere were refugees welcome, and from the outset the Australian government also pursued a restrictive refugee policy. The guidelines of the White Australian Policy, alongside economic concerns, did not permit the acceptance of groups who, because of their color or behaviour, were deemed to lack the ability to integrate and assimilate. Jewish applicants fell into the categories of 'unfit' and 'undesirable' migrants, with the exceptions of those who brought with them considerable assets. Australian Jews accepted this policy. Sir Samuel Cohen, president of the Great Synagogue in Sydney, went even so far as to declare in 1934:

We favor an even more rigorous hand-picking than the government - in its wisdom and kindness - has seen to impose.

Self-interest prevailed, aiming to safeguard the status and homogeneity of the community and to demonstrate to the outside world that Australian Jewry was an integral part of society. In 1933 Australian Jewry was a tiny, highly acculturated community numbering only 23,000 members, largely residing in Melbourne and constituting only 0.5 percent of the population – a percentage similar to today's percentage. Most Jews were native born of Anglo-Jewish ancestry who had never experienced the impact of any anti-Jewish laws.

Between 1933 and 1937 no more than 750 landing permits were granted for Jewish refugees. In July 1938, the Evian Conference was held to solve the growing refugee crisis in Europe, but hardly anything was achieved. Thomas White, Australia's representative, summed up the Australian response to the refugee crisis when he made his famous statement:

Australia cannot do more. We have no real racial problem. We are not desirous of importing one by encouraging any scheme of large-scale foreign immigration.



A few months later, in November 1938, the world witnessed an event which proved to be a milestone on the twisted road to Auschwitz: the *Reich-Kristallnacht* – the bloody pogrom unleashed in Germany, Austria and the Sudetenland. The burning of synagogues and sacred texts, the ransacking of shops and homes, the beatings and murder and the incarceration of 30,000 Jewish men in concentration camps left a lasting imprint on German and Austrian Jews. Most abandoned their ties to the beloved countries of birth in which they and their families had lived for generations and in which they had felt at home. A mass panic to flee broke out.

The news of the pogrom spread across the world triggering protests almost everywhere. The William Cooper story is one protest that is among the most striking Australian responses to the Holocaust.

William Cooper, a proud Aboriginal Elder of the Yorta nation, was the secretary of – and driving force behind – the Australian Aborigines' League, formed in Melbourne in 1933 to campaign for the enfranchisement and direct representation of Aboriginal people in parliament, and for land rights.

At a time when Aboriginal people themselves were denied citizenship and other basic human rights, and were subjected to appalling physical, social and economic privations, William Cooper was moved to action when he heard the news of the *Kristallnacht* pogrom. On 6 December 1938, aged 77 and in ill health, he led a delegation of Aborigines from his Footscray home to the German consulate in Melbourne. The German Consul, Dr Hellenthal, a staunch Nazi, refused entry and the petition was left on the doorstep. Addressed to the German government, the petition read:

On behalf of the Aborigines of Australia a strong protest at the cruel persecution of the Jewish people by the Nazi Government of Germany.

The Melbourne-based *Argus*, the only paper to do so, broke the news about the Aboriginal protest that same day. The story attracted little attention.

It really does not matter that the petition never reached Berlin. What matters is that this public protest by Aborigines on the eve of the Holocaust with its expression of solidarity with another oppressed people – designated to be removed and wiped out – was a remarkable gesture of humanity. The recognition and respect that resulted have also forged a significant bond between the Aboriginal people and the Jewish community.

Following *Kristallnacht* the Australian government signaled its preparedness to accept 15,000 refugees over the following three years. The annual quota of 5,000 was subdivided: 4,000 landing permits were allocated to Jews, 1,000 to non-Jews. Even before the time-consuming emigration procedures had been completed and the quotas filled, the outbreak of the Second World War closed the escape routes of emigration. Australia House in London, in charge of emigration, continued to be inundated with 200,000 visa applications.

By then some 9,000 Jews from Central Europe had found a safe haven in Australia. Upon arrival they were characterised by a threefold stigma: they were Germans, refugees and Jews, colloquially known as 'reffos', or 'bloody reffos'. The reception by the Jewish community engendered animosities. Australian Jewry, in particular its leadership, expected the 'new arrivals' to adapt in record time to the norms and values of their host country. Only later did German-Jewish émigrés realise that they

themselves had not behaved any differently towards their fellow Jews from East Europe who had sought refuge in Germany in the Wilhelmine Empire and Weimar Republic. The unwanted *Ostjuden* had encountered rejection because they were different in respect of their origin, language, dress, religiosity, social position and customary occupations. After their expulsion, Jews from Central Europe experienced what it was like to cope as refugees – refugees who were preceded by the reputation of arrogance, superiority complexes, and pedantry. They remained isolated for some time, forming the often-caricatured *Gruppen* and *Grüppchen*, groups in which they fostered intimate social contacts in a familiar milieu.

Isaac Steinberg arrived in Australia from London in 1939 as a representative of the *Freeland League*, an organisation attempting to find a safe haven for European Jewry. His brief was to convince landowners and politicians, parties and parliaments, churches and trade unions to allow Jews to establish a settlement in the remote Kimberley. The Australian government did not see itself in a position to diverge from its White Australia Policy and to approve an 'alien group settlement'. Many Jewish leaders, especially Zionist representatives, rejected the project totally, well aware that it was designed as a post-war home for Holocaust survivors. By mid-1943 Steinberg left Australia and in September he wrote to Prime Minister Curtain:

Millions of my people, including women and children, are being persecuted for no guilt at all. The dreadful word extermination hovers over the heads of the remnants of Israel in a drastic way as cannot even be imagined by peaceful and decent people ... Far as the Australians are from those areas where Jewish dignity and lives are being destroyed, they felt, however, the bonds of elementary solidarity and gave expression to it whenever possible. The Kimberley scheme, thus, gave them the opportunity of offering some constructive aid to those homeless people.

During the Holocaust, Australia, like other countries of the 'free world' adopted the position of a bystander nation. News of the plight of European Jewry filtered through, not only via top-secret diplomatic cables or media coverage, but also in messages sent by Jews trapped in Nazi Europe to relatives and friends. Initially these were censored private letters, then censored Red Cross cards which permitted the transmission of up to 25 words only. Deportations to the killing fields in the east put an end to postal communication.

'Ordinary' Australians were informed about the events of the unfolding 'Jewish catastrophe' in Europe. The print media and radio reported the rise of antisemitism in Germany, and the persecution of German and Austrian Jews/Reichskristallnacht attracted extensive media coverage, followed by articles on deportation and ghettoization, atrocities, mass executions and death camps and, sporadically from 1943 onwards, on gas chambers. The name 'Auschwitz' or 'Oswiecim' was mentioned in 24 articles. Yet, Australia's media focused on the war against Japan, with some 300 Australian war correspondents reporting on events in the Far East. Not one served in Nazi-controlled Europe, even though they would not have been permitted to visit the ghettos and other murder sites of the Holocaust.

The media coverage did not break the prevailing mood of public indifference to the fate of European Jewry. The only interest centered around Jewish refugees appeared in a stunning secret security report by the predecessor of ASIO to the government in May 1943 which stated:

There is a strong feeling against the Jews who have come to Australia within the last seven or eight years and, it is

suggested, that this viewpoint should be stressed upon the government with the object of preventing any further landing permits being granted to them. When the persecution of the Jews first began, most people felt sorry for them and were prepared to welcome them, but their actions since then show that they are no good as citizens and are merely parasites on the rest of the community. It is considered that if a plebiscite were taken, this would represent the opinion of nine of ten of the community.

In a 1943 opinion poll of 439 interviewees, 75 percent were opposed to large scale Jewish immigration. Some displayed antisemitic resentments, a phenomenon which also emerged in other countries of exiles. In May 1942 Bundists and Socialists, Communists and Zionists joined forces in Melbourne to establish the Jewish Council to Combat Fascism and Anti-Semitism.

From mid-1942 communal leaders in Australia received news about the mass murder of European Jews. They did not know the full details of the Holocaust, an event unprecedented in history which defies explanation. Leading Jewish representatives, such as Nachum Goldmann and Stephen Wise, founders of the World Jewish Congress, admitted years later that at the time they were simply unable to grasp the true nature of the Jewish catastrophe. This also applied to communal leaders in Australia, although some understood that German policy of mass murder would result in the annihilation of European Jewry.

Rabbi Dr Israel Porush warned repeatedly of the 'utter annihilation of Israel'. In 1933 he had left Germany and immigrated to England with his German-born wife. Arriving in Australia in 1940 and taking up a rabbinical position in Sydney, on Tisha B'Av in July 1942, he proclaimed in his sermon with significant insight:

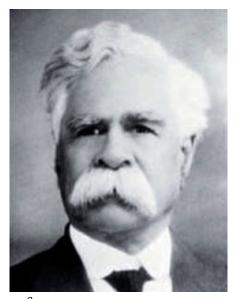
The pinnacle of our modern calamity was reached after the advent of Nazism in Germany, particularly since the outbreak of war. Of the little that filters through from countries occupied by Germany one can gauge the extent of martyrdom which our flesh and blood is suffering. Over a million Jews were massacred in the most brutal manner by the Gestapo and its henchmen. Some 6 million are now under the heel of Nazidom: they all face annihilation, if God forbid, salvation does not come soon.

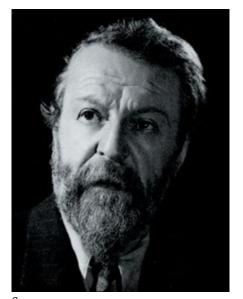
Salvation did not come soon. However, what gradually emerged in Australia was a new Jewish leadership that faced the terrible consequences of the Holocaust and realised that they had to make every effort to rescue the remnants of European Jewry and to support the creation of a Jewish State in Palestine. These responses to the Holocaust in 1942, so historian Suzanne Rutland argues, marked a watershed in the history of Australian Jewry.

Belatedly and reluctantly the Allies responded to the Holocaust with declamatory gestures. On 17 December 1942 the famous joint allied declaration was issued condemning for the first time 'the bestial cold-blooded extermination of the Jews' and giving warning that those 'responsible for the crimes shall not escape retribution'. As loyal partner of the Allies, Australia expressed its 'whole-hearted association' with the declaration.

Australian Jewish leaders had received prior news of the declaration from their counterparts in London, New York and Jerusalem and were asked to approach the government. Saul Symonds' telegram on 15 December to Prime Minster Curtain reads:

The Jewish Community of New South Wales is profoundly grieved by the terrible news of the systematic extermination by the Nazis of the whole population of Poland and other Nazi occupied countries - and implores the Commonwealth







2 3

Government to approach Mr. Churchill and President Roosevelt urging all possible measures be taken to deter the Nazis from carrying out their diabolic intentions.

One day later Curtin received a telegram from Cecil Luber and Maurcice Laserson:

Australian section World Jewish Congress has received advice from New York — confirming Hitler's order — to exterminate Jews in Poland and other Nazi occupied countries. Almost 2 million Jews already massacred. In our extreme anxiety we urge you to support Churchill's and Roosevelt's proposed measures deterring Nazis from continuing horror against the Jewish people.

Curtin's telegraphic response was prompt and short. He simply referred to Australia's 'wholehearted association' with the allied declaration.

Alongside the pledge to the government stood the appeal to the Jewish community. The initiative came not from the oldestablished leadership but from a small group of recent arrivals from Europe. The Zionist Dr Jona Machover played a vital role in establishing the United Emerging Committee for European Jewry, representing almost all Jewish groups. Other powersharing arrangements followed, bringing about a broadening of the community's organisational structures and activities, ending, as Peter Medding put it, 'the Anglo-Jewish patrician control'. Young activist and co-founder of Habonim Shmuel Rosenkranz commenced his long journey through communal organisations and committees, becoming a key figure of Australian Jewry. He witnessed the 'internal' disputes and lines of demarcation, the heated debates on Zionism, the animosities between the established leadership and refugee organisations established in Melbourne by the dynamic Rabbi Hermann Sanger and in Sydney by Max Joseph. By 1944 he must have been aware that all efforts - rallies and resolutions, petitions and pamphlets - aimed at rescuing European Jews had fallen on deaf ears.

Take one example: From the outbreak of the war, communal leaders had sought permission for the admission of Jewish refugee children, first from Germany and Austria and then from Holland, Belgium and France, assuring the government that the Jewish Welfare Society would look after them. Four hundred and fifty landing permits were granted, but not one child refugee reached Australia, as one clause dictated the exclusion of parents and relatives. The clause proved to be unnecessary as, from 1943

onwards, the authorities in Canberra knew that the families of the children were either dead or had been deported. Cabinet discussions focused instead on a calculation that was widespread in all allied governmental circles. It was the fear expressed in a cabinet protocol:

Of the possibility that the Germans would change their policy of extermination Amongst our many Amongst our many over to a policy of intrusion, that is, forcing the refugees out of enemy occupied territories and embarrassing other countries by flooding them with alien immigrants.

This was indeed a striking Australian response to the final phase of the Holocaust.

The war aim of the Allies in Europe was the 'unconditional surrender' of Nazi Germany rather that the rescue of Jews. To put it differently, a military victory was seen as a prerequisite for the end to the Holocaust. As this was achieved only in May 1945, the Germans had in fact won the war against the Jews: the Jewish world in Europe was destroyed.

This is an edited extract of the Betty and Shmuel Rosenkranz Oration Professor Konrad Kwiet delivered at the Jewish Holocaust Centre in November 2016. Emeritus Professor Kwiet is Resident Historian at the Sydney Jewish Museum and former Pratt Foundation Professor in Jewish History and Holocaust Studies at the University of Sydney.

1 (I-r) David Cohen, Professor Konrad Kwiet, Warren Fineberg and Phillip Maisel OAM

2 William Cooper

3 Isaac Steinberg

4 Rabbi Dr Israel Porush

## It started with words

#### Baba Schwartz



United Nations Holocaust Memorial Day is held to accord with the resolution of the UN General Assembly proclaiming 27 January, the day in 1945 on which Auschwitz was liberated, as the annual international memorial day to mark the Holocaust. Co-hosted by the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) and the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (JCCV), this year's commemoration was held at the Jewish Holocaust Centre. Baba Schwartz, a Holocaust survivor, provided witness testimony. This is an edited version of her address.

Gertrude is a Holocaust survivor who lives in Vienna. She is 89. We do not know her surname. She lost all her family in Auschwitz. Last November she made a video in which she warned Austrians not to vote for the far-right party. It was seen by almost 3 million people around the world.

Drawing parallels with the antisemitism of the Nazis in the 1930s, she said: 'The thing that bothers me most is the denigration of others... I have seen this once before... and it hurts and scares me.'

Gertrude's statement is so matter of fact. Without calling up the big issues of the Holocaust, she goes to the seeds of it. The seeds of evil. She sees how it can start with just words. We are having that debate in Australia today. Is it okay to be a bigot in the interest of free speech? Gertrude says it certainly is not.

I too am 89 and was in Auschwitz. Listen carefully to us, for we are the last of the survivors, the last of the witnesses.

I was born in Nyirbator, a rural town of 12,000 people in Eastern Hungary. Three thousand were Jewish.

My childhood was happy. I loved my gentle father, Julius Keimovits, my lively mother, Boske, and my two sisters. As I wrote in my memoir *The May Beetles*:

This... father, this mother, this family, is the life I would wish for everyone. No harm in any of us, but instead a sense of the

inexhaustible delight in the world. Yes, if I could bestow a gift on others, it would be to live as my family had before the great darkness. Let everyone know what it was like to bask in the love and care of such a mother and such a father. Let everyone know what it was like to have Erna and Marta as sisters.

While we were observant Jews, we lived in peace and harmony with our non-Jewish neighbours.

By late 1930s anti-Jewish laws were introduced in Hungary. Emboldened, Hungarian soldiers would march through our town, singing songs denigrating the Jews. And as time passed, the words became more dangerous.

Amongst our many close non-Jewish friends were the Szucs. We almost lived in each other's homes. This warm friendship remained unspoilt until one day, in 1938, one of the Szucs boys passed us in the street and shouted: 'Stinking Jews!'

He was influenced by the hateful sentiments that had become commonplace. It started with words. And then, the actions.

The German army marched into Hungary on 19 March 1944. The Hungarians, well primed in the hatred of Jews, became their willing helpers. It all unfolded fast, with new shocks every day. All Jews had to surrender their jewellery and radios; all Jews had to wear the yellow star.

My grandfather, Yitzchak Kellner, a community leader and a man of great dignity was beaten almost to death for defying the orders of the Hungarians.

Then the entire Jewish population was ordered to pack for a short trip and taken to holding camps for about a month. And then, three days of unspeakable horror, in cattle wagons, to Auschwitz. Crammed in, 70 to a carriage.

We were exhausted and driven almost mad by the continual dread,

and the endless clatter of metal wheels. When the train finally came to a halt we had arrived at the gates of hell.

My beloved father was gassed in that accursed place. My late husband Andor, Zichrono L'vraha, lost his entire family, as did Gertrude of Vienna. So many lives were taken for no reason, murdered by the Nazis and their enthusiastic collaborators. My mother, sisters and I survived by good fortune and the iron will and courage of my mother.

From Auschwitz we were taken to a number of other camps; slave labor for the German army. The fear, hunger, freezing cold, and exhaustion were unrelenting.

Then the death march in winter. The Russian Army was approaching. The Nazis retreating.

The SS were marching their bedraggled slaves westward. As I describe in my book:

... the wind cut us to the bone as we marched. We wore wooden clogs, without socks. The snow hardened on the wood, creating a wedge, and often we slipped and fell onto the frozen ground. We helped each other up. 'Girls try to keep your feet,' our mother said. 'Keep walking.' We all knew that the SS would drag us aside and shoot us if they saw us fall... We passed many bodies lying on the roadside.

We managed to escape and before long we were liberated by the Russians, eventually making it back to our town in Hungary. Of the 3,000 Jews, only about 130 returned.

I married Andor; we had a son. We made aliya; we had another son. Ten years later we migrated to Australia; we had our third son. This country has been good to us. It has been a free and just country. Let's keep it that way.

Can it all happen again? You bet it can! We might not be the next, but some group will be. So let's keep telling our stories and cautioning against discrimination and hate. Let us all watch our words, before they turn into actions. As our sages said in Pirke Avot: 'Chaim vamavet beyad halashon' – life and death in the hands of the tongue'

In 2004 my husband and I funded the Path of Remembrance and Reflection at Yad Vashem. We constructed three headstones along the path to our loved ones who have no graves, no markers of ever having existed: One in memory of all the murdered Jews of Hungary; one in memory of my husband's family – his father Moritz, his mother Kato, his brother Imre and his little sister Erszike; and the third in memory of my father.

At the consecration of this path and the three headstones twelve years ago, I spoke of the burden of pain, sorrow and anger we survivors carry, a burden that does not diminish with time. I then spoke directly to my late father, Zichrono Le'vracha:

Now that your name is engraved on that stone I feel your immediate presence.

I feel it as strong as then, when Our eyes met for the last time At that accursed place at Auschwitz.

Do you remember?

Three hellish days and nights on the train of the damned, Not enough place to sit for all of us, You stood throughout that grim, fearful journey, So that we could sit, your beloved ones,

Your adored wife and treasured three daughters You lived only for us, we were all your life.

I do remember.

We were brought to Auschwitz, Sheep ready for slaughter. Everything happened with lightning speed, Men and women were separated, Then a selection, this to right that to left. Mother and we girls with the living were sent.

But no way for us to know to which side you went.

In a huge hall brisk orders barked:

All strip naked,

Drop your clothes where you stand.

Then inmates sheared our heads

And gave us rags to wear,

And from that shower on a warm day of May We came out altered, humiliated, shamed.

To C Lager they took us, empty, yet to be filled, Stood there for hours in front of our barrack.

The air was thick with smoke, the smell of burning flesh,

And old inmates told us unspeakable truth.

Then

A company of men passed, unforeseen, surprising.

I ran to see: were you amongst the men?

You wore prisoner's stripes and a prisoner cap,

Easy to recognise, you looked like your old self.

I, with boundless joy,

Arms raised called out to you:

Father, Apukam, look at me, here I am.

You looked at me, puzzled,

Questions rose in your eyes.

I did not know why, I did not see myself.

A crazy woman waving,

Hairless and in rags.

Do you remember?

And I kept on screaming,

Here I am look at me!

My voice did it? Perhaps,

But recognition came.

Your eyes darkened with endless sorrow,

You could not bear the sight,

Buried your face into your hands

And shuffled away, sobbing.

The last time I saw you.

I was sixteen then and you were forty-eight, In the prime of your life, clever, capable, smart...

Father, do you hear me?

Good tidings I bring you now,

From Eretz Yisrael, from Yerushalayim,

I am here to greet you, a content old woman,

By my side my husband of fifty-seven years.

He is good and clever, dutiful and caring,

With a warm heart and an open hand,

And we all love him.

Look at our three sons now, Moshe, Yechiel-Alan, Danny,

Denied the joy of having grandfathers.

They would make you so proud,

As they make us parents.

Their wives and their children

Stand beside them also.

All are strong, all are bright,

Yet loving and tender.

You would love them, I know.

I hope that you hear me,

Apukam, dear Father

Yechiel Ben Rafael Menashe

Zichroncha Livracha, Alecha Shalom

Photo: Baba Schwartz

Photographer: Peter Haskin, Australian Jewish News

## **Ernest Fooks in Vienna**

#### Catherine Townsend

A highlight for the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) Archives in 2016 was our involvement with an Architecture Masters' Program project run by the University of Melbourne's School of Design. Through a well-timed coincidence, the School became aware of our collection of Ernest Fooks' (1906-1985) artefacts that had been donated to the Centre in the early 2000s by the architect's widow Noemi (nee Matusevics, 1909-2012). The School of Design's Professor Alan Pert, Professor Phillip Goad and academic Catherine Townsend were conducting a Masters Studio evaluating facets from the life of the Bratislavian-born Viennese Jewish Modernist Architect, Ernest Fooks, who fled Nazism in 1938 for a new life in Melbourne. The JHC was thrilled to be involved with this project, and contributed materials from Fooks's early life in Austria, including rare photographs, passports and his university documents. JHC Austrian intern, Armin Shoepf assisted with German translations, including excerpts of Fooks's PhD thesis. The exhibition was held at the Fooks's residence in North Caulfield: the display of artifacts drawn from various archives in Melbourne and beyond were gathered and reunited in a precise and sophisticated manner, much like Fooks himself. In sleek and embossed archive boxes, as well as sympathetically displayed reproductions of original materials, the various projects were presented within specific locations in the house, transforming the interior into a Memory Palace. The projects showed how Fooks had been engaged by many Jewish families for architectural work: domestic, commercial, and institutional; many were friends, demonstrating the deep bonds between the post-war Jewish community. This unique and outstanding exhibition beautifully graphed Ernest Fooks's history, and in doing so provided insight into his (and Noemi's) life and work

Dr Anna Hirsh, Jewish Holocaust Centre Archivist

Ernest Fooks's journey from young architect in the culturally vibrant but politically tumultuous city of Vienna to married man rebuilding his life in Australia is essential to understanding his work in Australia. When Fooks fled Europe he brought a detailed, rich and complex knowledge of both European town planning, modern architecture and contemporary artistic and psychological practice to Australia. He drew on this knowledge and transformed it to meet the requirements of his new location leaving a significant legacy of modern architecture for the Jewish community in Melbourne.

Avant-garde and modern: Ernest Fooks was an architect, town planner, artist, photographer, traveler, lecturer and author. His formative years were spent in Vienna, home of many outstanding modern artistic and intellectual achievements of the early 20th century. Born Ernst Fuchs into a secular Jewish middle-class family in Pressburg (now Bratislava), Fooks's family moved to Vienna in 1908. The city was in transition from the fin-de-siècle grandeur of the final years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the 'Red Vienna' period of the Social Democratic Party's (SDP) 1919-1934 administration. 'Red Vienna' revitalised and transformed the city, and was the impetus for lasting change in areas such as education, housing



and the arts. The fervent political climate fostered progressive artistic and intellectual tendencies. Schoenberg, Wittgenstein, Popper, Freud and the architects Adolf Loos, Josef Frank and Josef Hoffman were all active in Vienna in this period, and Fooks was influenced by this rich cultural climate. Fooks's life - like that of all central European Jews - was shattered during the 1930s. He escaped Europe and found haven in Melbourne, Australia, where he went on to make a notable contribution to modern architecture, with at least 240 built projects. He shaped the built form of the burgeoning postwar Jewish community in Melbourne, designing numerous houses, apartments and many important institutional buildings. An examination of the interwar Viennese environment, as well as Fooks's education, artistic practice, and early employment within this environment, highlights the ways that Vienna moulded Fooks's creative and academic practice, and influenced his later work in Australia

Fooks's education was a winding excursion through interwar Viennese modern architecture, art, dance, theatre, psychology and urban planning. In 1924 he began an architecture and civil engineering degree at the Technische Hochschule Vienna, the most conservative of the architectural schools in Vienna. He found his early architectural studies dry, with no relation to art, so he transferred to psychology. He spent two years in the philosophy faculty at the University of Vienna. The majority of his classes were with Karl Bühler, a gestalt psychologist and one of the founders of the influential Würzburg School of psychology. Fooks, however, was disappointed that Freud and Jung were yet to gain acceptance in this faculty. Disillusioned, he resumed his course in architecture. Nevertheless, his psychological training did guide his architectural practice; he

always considered human needs and interaction with the environment of importance in his work.

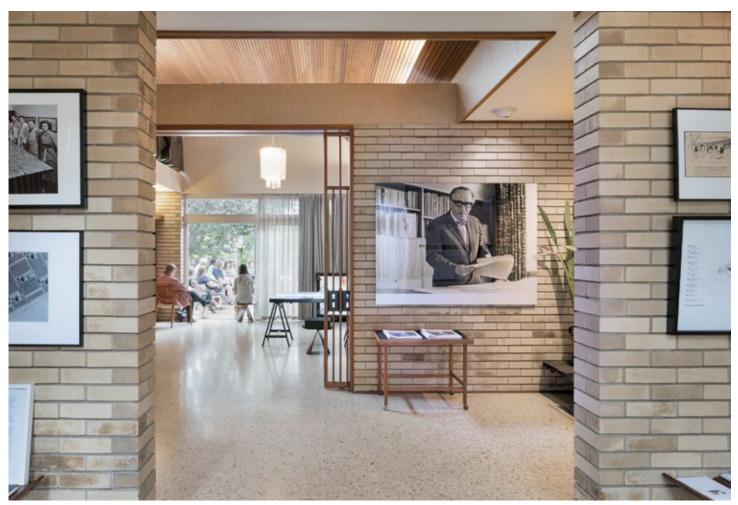
Fooks completed his architecture and civil engineering degree in 1929 and enrolled in a doctorate at the Technische Hochschule. He was awarded the degree of Doctor of Technical Sciences in 1932. Fooks's doctoral thesis on linear cities was at the forefront of contemporary urban planning theory. When Fooks arrived in Australia in 1939 one of the many clear differences between him and his local counterparts was his high level of postgraduate education.

Fooks characterised the interdisciplinary artistic interests of many Viennese and throughout his studies was closely involved in the wider avant-garde cultural life of Vienna. His interests included dance, photography, travel, art, and theatre design. Concurrent with his studies Fooks enrolled at a Rudolf von Laban dance school run by Gertrud Bodenweiser, one of the great dancers of the period. In the late 1920s he was involved in the theatre producing costume designs and working for the influential theatre and film director Max Reinhardt. Fooks's enduring interest in photography began in one of his first year university subjects. Much of his photography was devoted to documenting the many Bildungsreisen (educational journeys) he took throughout his life. Before leaving Europe he had travelled through Austria, Germany, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy, former Yugoslavia, France, Sweden, Norway and England photographing and sketching buildings as he went. He exhibited drawings from his travels in 1931 at the

Vienna Künstlerhaus, one of the foremost galleries in Vienna. Throughout his student years Fooks was politically active as a member of the Socialist Student Association.

Fooks's early work experience was on the *Wiener Gemeindebauten* (Viennese council housing), the largest architectural project in interwar Vienna, during his university vacations. Between 1929 and 1932 Fooks worked for his professor Siegfried Theiss in the practice Theiss and Jaksch, one of the most successful and enduring firms in Austria. His work here included the firm's most lauded projects, the Hochhaus Herrengasse, 1929-1932. During this time he also spent a brief period working in the office of Le Corbusier. He later credited his work experience with Le Corbusier as one of the most influential experiences of his life.

In 1932 Fooks became a founding partner of Atelier Bau und Wohnung with W. Stept, N. Tröster and his former colleague at Theiss and Jaksch W. Fabian, winning several significant architectural prizes, including the Central Organisation of Austrian Architects 1932 competition for *Das Wachsende Haus*, (the growing house). However, Fooks's burgeoning career diminished in the years between 1934 and 1938. This is not surprising given rising antisemitism, political instability, rising inflation and high rates of unemployment which significantly reduced building activity. In 1934 his association with Atelier Bau und Wohnung ended. It is unclear from the archival material why this occurred; however, it is notable that in 1934 the political situation in Austria became increasingly



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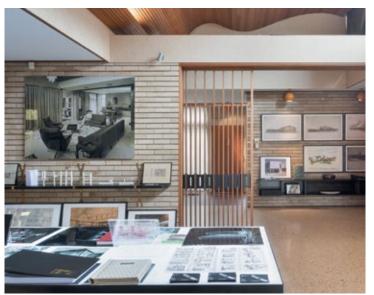


unsettled. Within two weeks of the Austrian Civil War Fooks moved to Linz and began six months' work for architect Hermann Neumann.

In 1936 Fooks won third prize for a farming estate in Lower Austria. He also collaborated on a town planning scheme for Teplitz-Schönau Czechoslovakia. He designed a tenement block in Vienna including the interiors and furnishings. This building is important as in it we can see the genesis of Fooks's style that he would later use in the numerous apartment blocks he designed in Australia. From 1934 to 1938 Fooks lectured on the history of architecture for the adult education board at the University of Vienna. After the *Anschluss* the situation in Vienna for Jews became dire and this galvanized Fooks's decision to leave Austria. His migration to Australia occurred simply because it was the first country to admit him.

In Australia Fooks did not abandon his European training and ideas. Rather he embraced his new experiences and infused his cultural heritage into his Australian life. His social ideals and his high level of town planning education were invaluable for his work for the Victorian Housing Commission which mostly consisted of planning new estates. His education and four years lecturing in Vienna prepared him for lecturing in town planning at RMIT from 1944 to 1954. His many European publications were his calling card to publishers in Australia and aided him in his 1940s writings for *The Australian Home Beautiful* and other local publications. These writings mostly focused on European developments in architecture and town planning. His doctorate coupled with his publishing experience assisted the publication of *X-Ray the City! The Density Diagram: Basis for Urban Planning* (1946). His broader

cultural activities and exhibition at the Künstlerhaus paved the way for his many art exhibitions in Australia. When Fooks was unable to progress in his career as a town planner, which he in part attributed to antisemitism, the breadth of his Viennese architectural experience enabled him to develop his own architectural practice. His significant experience with



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the Weiner Gemeindebauten and more specifically his solo commission for a tenement block influenced the scores of residential apartment buildings he designed in Melbourne. In his progressive architectural practice Fooks remained true to the gentle modernism of Vienna, and when assimilating new influences they were more likely to be from other Viennese émigrés. Fooks's house designs were, like much of his work in Vienna, meticulously detailed and often in collaboration with artists and craftsmen such as fellow émigrés Schulim Krimper and sculptor Karl Duldig.

Fooks's European experience, migration and marriage to Noemi Matusvics established within him a greater sense of Jewish identity: previously he had been a secular Jew for whom Judaism had little personal importance. In Australia he embraced this heritage and took active part in Jewish affairs as member, and at times president, of both B'nai Brith Community Service Organisation and the Jewish Society of Arts. Fooks also contributed to and benefited from the growth of the Jewish community that occurred with the emigration of European Jews before and after the Second World War. These Jewish immigrants were a sophisticated client group, and as they became established in Australia they sought architects who could provide them with the urbane modernist architecture they knew in Europe. Modern architecture in the 1950s and 1960s still represented optimism for the future and was well suited to those who were rebuilding new lives away from the violent antisemitism of old Europe. Fooks's important cultural and professional experience in Vienna saw him well placed to meet this demand; the vast majority of his prolific architectural practice was designing for Jewish clients. He designed scores of houses and apartments and his Jewish institutional buildings include Mount Scopus Memorial College, 1954 onwards with Anatol Kagan; B'nai Brith Lodge St Kilda 1957; Adass Israel Synagogue Elsternwick 1962; Jewish Community Centre Canberra 1971; and the Chevra Kadisha burial society St Kilda 1979. The sheer number and quality of commissions meant that Fooks shaped the built form of Melbourne's Jewish community in the 1950s and 1960s, and in doing so made a significant contribution to modern architecture in Australia. Uncovering the details of Fooks's Viennese influences provides new light in which to consider his significant Australian work, the further analysis of which will deepen our understanding of the breadth and complexity of modernism in Australia.

This is an edited extract of Catherine Townsend's article written for the publication The House Talks Back, prepared as part of The House Talks Back exhibition held at the Fooks house in December 2016 and March 2017. Catherine Townsend has a research interest in European architects who migrated to Australia between 1930 and 1965. If you have any information on this topic please contact her on catherinetownsend@gmail.com.

1 Noemi and Ernest Fooks Noemi Fooks Collection, JHC

2–5 The House Talks Back exhibition at the Fooks house Photographer: Tatjana Plitt

## Passing memories down the generations: Jack Fogel and family

Carol Saffer



I marvel at the resilience of the Jewish people. Their best characteristic is their desire to remember. No other people has such an obsession with memory.

Eli Wiesel

There is a scene near the end of the film *A Woman in Gold* in which Maria Latman (played by Helen Mirren) is granted the return of the Klimt painting of her aunt Adele by an Austrian court. Afterwards, as she is walking through the streets of Vienna with her nephew, she stops and says, 'I will be back in a minute.' Maria walks to a grandiose building, climbs the stairs and enters the reception area of a business. She says, 'I used to know this house. May I look around?' The receptionist replies, 'Of course; you are welcome.' The following scene is one of Maria walking through the rooms of the house reliving and wrapped in her memories. This building was the house in which she grew up.

Memory has been defined as a social process, inherently selective and interpretive, and the meaning we give to experience. Memories can be prompted by personal mementos - keepsakes, or something that reminds one of past events like souvenirs of an experience or occasion.

When Holocaust survivor Jack Fogel, aged 91, was liberated on 3 May 1945 he had no mementos, nothing at all in his possession. Until he tracked down his sister's husband in Israel many years later he had no photos. However, he had many memories

In 1939, when Jack was 15, he shared a room with his parents, three brothers, one sister and another family in the ghetto near Turek in occupied Poland. They all slept on the floor. Jack spent a lot of time outside to get away from everyone in the room.

Jack was standing on the street one day when German soldiers pulled up in a truck. 'I was loaded onto the truck with about 20 other people. They drove us away,' Jack recalled. 'This was the last time I saw my family. They all died in the Holocaust.'

Jack has been a volunteer at the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) for the last 18 years. Each week he gives testimony to school groups that visit the Centre. Jack says, 'I tell my story twice a week. This is my story.'

It would seem that this retelling of his story has enabled him to speak about the memories rather than keep them inside. Jack says that other survivors at JHC, or others he knew when he first arrived in Australia, were very reluctant to pass on their stories to their children. However, they could not explain why they found it difficult.

Jack did not speak to his two daughters about his memories when they were children. When asked when he started talking about it he replied, 'I didn't want to tell horrible stories to my girls. If you have been through those atrocities are you going to tell your children what happened to you?'

Judy Kras, Jack's eldest daughter, did not attend a Jewish day school and did not have many Jewish friends. She was in her teens and a member of Habonim Dror when she recalls her earliest memory of that distinctive knowing that her father had lost his family in the Holocaust.

Judy felt as a teenager that this was a 'chicken and egg' situation. She cannot specifically recall when or how it became a 'no-go zone' to talk or ask about what had happened to her father during the war.

'I would not be alone in saying that there was never a time when my dad sat me down and said, "I went through the war and this is what happened," Judy says. 'He was a child. He did not go off to war as a soldier.'

Judy believes that her father finds it much easier to tell his story to someone else's children rather than to his own. Telling the story at the JHC is easier than telling your daughters at primary school age, she says. She goes on to say that she knew her parents' friends were Polish. She knew they were survivors but does not remember when she actually found out. 'It was kind of there but not really discussed.'

Judy feels that the connection with her father is different from that with her mother. He worked long hours and was not around as much as her mother. 'In my memory it was my mum who said more; she was a bit of a go-between. I think she might have been the gatekeeper.'

Jack's grandson, David Kras, attends a Jewish day school. 'It was in the latter years of primary school,' David says. 'I remember seeing the tattoo on Grandpa's arm and asking Mum what that was ... That was how the conversation started.' Judy was continuing the tradition of being the gatekeeper.

When he found out about what his grandfather had been through as a 15-year-old boy, David found it surreal. 'I wondered about how strong and resilient you would have to be to come out of something like that,' says David. He empathised that his grandfather worried that his parents would be anxious about where he was. Jack was more concerned about his parents than about his own well being on that day in 1939. David said he would have felt the same. He too would have worried that his mother Judy and his father Mark would have no idea where he was

David says that his grandfather does not refer to his past very often when speaking with him. In fact David learnt more about Jack's life – past and present and what happened in between – as the result of a school project. This was when he interviewed Jack while undertaking the Living Historians' Project with his classmates in Year 7, and later when studying the Holocaust in depth in Year 10.

When David's class visited the JHC, Jack gave testimony that day. David was proud that his grandfather shared his memories, not with just him, but with his classmates as well. David says

that while he was familiar with Jack's story, 'No-one should really have to think about trying to imagine what they would do in the same circumstances.'

Judy comments that 'the artefacts (mementos) at JHC touch the emotion.' They make the stories much more human. David says he wanted to hear his grandfather's memories. For him too, the mementos he saw made a significant impact. It was the children's toys that affected David the most. He said, 'My toys comforted and made me happy.' It made him think about those toys and the children who had played with them.

Since arriving in Australia in 1949 Jack has been back to Poland once, nearly 20 years ago. He returned to his hometown with his wife Ruth. It did not mean much to him, but Ruth was very excited to see where he had lived.

At Ruth's insistence he climbed the stairs of the house. Jack reached the top and could not bring himself to knock on the door. What if someone opened the door and then slammed it in his face? He could not bear that thought, so he left and returned to his wife in the street.

Unlike Maria Latman in the movie, Jack did not get to relive his memories in his family's home, but he has now shared and possibly relived them with two generations of his own family.

The relating of memories across generations can sometimes be affected, just as in the children's game *Chinese whispers*, where the stories told of our experiences change as they are repeated. Monica Eileen Patterson in *Memory Across Generations: The Future of 'Never Again'* (2003) says:

The experiences that produce our memories take place within a complex of power relations, and are recalled, remade and forgotten within a set of power relations as well. The very idea of intergenerational memory highlights the importance of understanding not only the past in which consequential events have occurred, but also the intervening periods between these earlier times and the present.

Carol Saffer was the recipient of the Jewish Holocaust Centre Irene and Ignace Rosental Journalism Internship Scholarship in 2016. The internship supports full-time journalism students to undertake an accredited two-week internship at the Centre.

Photo: (I-r) Jack Fogel, Judy Kras, Ruth Fogel, Mark Kras, David Kras, Wayne and Helene Levin

## Hide and Seek: Stories of Survival

### Lisa Phillips



Educating young people about the Holocaust creates a challenge. How do we create an entry point into serious historical issues? How do we help young students to connect with their peers from the past? How do we educate against the dangers of prejudice, racism and antisemitism?

The Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) education team began examining ways to reach out to a broader range of ages, and one challenge that presented was how to adapt our successful Nona Lee senior school program into a suitable, accessible and safe program for younger students.

Survivor testimony is at the heart of our senior program. At least 22 Holocaust survivors attend the Centre once or twice a week to share their testimonies, which are complemented by providing students with the opportunity to investigate artefacts and evidence in the museum. The senior student responses to these witness testimonies are overwhelmingly positive.

The success of the senior program inspired us to take specific elements from it and craft an age-appropriate program for a younger audience which we called *Hide and Seek: Stories of Survival.* The program was developed and piloted in 2014 and 2015 and ran last year with great success.

The catalyst to create a new program came during the 'Anne Frank' exhibition held at the JHC in 2013. This travelling exhibition attracted a wide range of schools and students, many of whom had not visited the JHC. The Anne Frank story, as we know, is accessible to a younger audience and provides a case study focusing on children and teenagers during the Holocaust. For many young readers *The Diary of Anne Frank* is their first encounter with this topic.

We considered the appeal of Anne Frank's story and how we could use it as the foundation of the Hide and Seek program. Our starting point was the authentic voice of Anne Frank aged between 13 and 15 as expressed in her diary and her responses to the changing world around her. She also addressed the universal themes of prejudice and racism, importantly recognising the role of those who stood up to racism and assisted those in peril, who we now know as the 'Righteous Among the Nations'. We also believed that we could use the

plethora of children's literature about the Holocaust to develop the program.

These themes in Anne Frank's diary and other Holocaust literature for children have strong links with both senior primary and middle school curricula in Australia, as students develop their ethical understandings and civic responsibilities.

The Hide and Seek program comprises the following:

#### Introduction

Students begin by answering three questions on 'Post-it' notes and placing them on butcher paper around the room. Why am I here today?

- What is one thing I know about the Holocaust?
- What is one thing I am grateful for today?

This is an icebreaker activity designed to bring the students into a new learning space and create an active learning environment.

This activity is followed by a ten-minute introduction during which one of our education officers links the students' texts to the museum and ensures there is a basic understanding of the terms 'Holocaust', 'Aryan race', 'antisemitism' and 'propaganda'.

#### **Discriminatory Laws**

With the whole group together, we devise a ten-minute activity around the role of laws in a democratic society and the impact of the discriminatory laws against the Jews. We reinforce this activity by exploring artefacts in the 'Rise of Nazism' section of the museum, and hearing how these laws had an impact on our child survivors. For example, Irma could not buy ice cream; Henri did not understand why he was expelled from school; and Paul was banned from borrowing library books. Once again, we connect the historical content with the personal narrative.

Students then rotate through the three activities: the challenges of leaving home and physically hiding, hiding one's identity, and a museum visit. Each activity lasts for 20 minutes.

#### **Activity 1 - Physically Hiding**

We needed to find a space in the museum that felt safe and was away from more confronting imagery. The perfect place



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presented itself: the background wallpaper used to create Anne Frank's room remained in position in a small room at the Centre. Adding cushions on the floor and using low lighting, we created a sensory experience designed to stimulate curiosity and enhance the narrative of the hiding story. The learning experience is carefully designed with thoughtfully structured questions to stimulate the students' thinking. We also aim to challenge students with an age-appropriate dilemma, as we want them to develop their understanding of the restricted movements of those who were forced into hiding. In doing so we hope to inspire a sense of empathy with the Holocaust survivor whose testimony they would later hear.

#### Activity 2 - False Identity

In addition to hiding in a physical space, we also explore hiding through changing one's identity. We have created false identity cards based on the *Kennkarte* of the Third Reich and students are issued with a 'new identity', with details they have to memorise. Students are then tested on the details, in order to highlight the challenges of taking on a new identity as a matter of survival. This activity also demonstrates how the fascist laws of Nazi Germany necessitated the denial of one's heritage for Jews and other groups who were the target of discrimination and prejudice.

Both these activities are followed by debriefing sessions to ensure that the students are not adversely affected, and also that they understand the historical context. Holocaust survivors are often present which creates a concrete link between the activity and survivors' personal experiences.

#### Activity 3 - Museum Visit

Students visit specified sections of the museum that reinforce the hiding stories addressed in the previous two activities. These

areas include *Hiding, Evading & Escaping; Other Victims; Acts of Courage;* and *Rise of Nazism and Humiliation.* The opportunity to see 'real' evidence is a vital element in transforming what has been 'imaginary' into 'reality'.

#### **Survivor Testimony**

Listening to survivors' testimony, and particularly that of child survivors, is at the heart of the *Hide and Seek* program. We focus on their loss of childhood, the disruption to family life and the fears they faced. As with all our programs, we end with a reflection where students consider one thing they have learnt and one thing for which they are grateful.

#### Responses

The responses by teachers and students to date have been extremely positive and our bookings are steadily growing. In 2015 we received formal government recognition of the program, receiving the Multicultural Award for Excellence in Education, a resounding validation of our work.

The future looks bright for the *Hide and Seek* program. We plan to develop more activities to complement the current program, so teachers are able to choose components to fit their curricular needs. We are grateful to Gandel Philanthropy for recognising the potential in educating younger children about the Holocaust, funding our pilot program and continuing to fund *Hide and Seek* over the next three years.

Lisa Phillips is the JHC Director of Education.

1–3 Students participating in the Hide and Seek Program with Joe de Haan

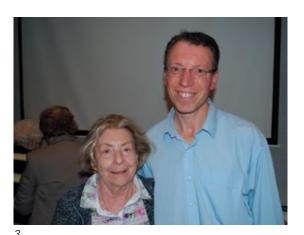
Photographer: Joseph Feil

## JHC Social Club

#### Barbara Sacks









Holocaust survivors, volunteers and guides, together with their friends, look forward to the monthly meeting of the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) Social Club. The Club has continued to attract stimulating and informative speakers, and participants always ask searching questions and take part in lively discussion after each presentation.

Over the three months from September last year, the theme of our discussions was Israel and the Middle East. Dr Dan Porat, a researcher at the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation at Monash University and a former IDF intelligence officer, journalist and international analyst with a focus on Iran's nuclear program and international security, addressed us on 'Iran, Israel, and the Bomb'. Megan Goldin, a journalist and former producer of the television programs 7:30 Report and Foreign Correspondent, later spoke about 'How the Media Covers Israel', and Dr Dvir Abramovich, Chair of B'nai B'rith Anti-Defamation Commission and The Israel Kipen Lecturer in Jewish Studies and Director of the Program in Jewish Culture and Society at The University of Melbourne, discussed 'The War Against Israel'. These three presentations gave us much food for thought.

Sue Hampel OAM, co-president of the JHC, delivered an address titled 'From Romania to Poland – and to Rwanda: a Reflective Journey of the Child of a Holocaust Survivor'. A former high school teacher at Mount Scopus Memorial College, Sue founded the *March of the Living Australia* and is currently working at Monash University as a teaching associate in Modern Jewish History, Holocaust and Post-Conflict Studies. She has led

numerous groups of students and adults to Poland and Rwanda.

Gary Samowitz, CEO of Stand Up, spoke about 'Changing the World... Where Do We Start?' Gary was appointed as Stand Up's first CEO in 2009 and has played a key role in raising the awareness of social justice issues in the Jewish community through volunteering and the development of programs.

Complementing Gary's presentation, our next speaker, Nivy Balachandran, spoke about 'Confronting Bigotry'. Nivy designs and delivers programs to adults and youth on education about world views, conflict transformation, and cross-cultural communication. She is a recognised leader in interfaith and intercultural affairs who has represented Australia at interfaith conferences around the world.

The JHC Social Club regularly attracts between 45 to 60 people and welcomes members of the community to attend for bagels and coffee, and for stimulating and lively discussion. The Club meets monthly on Thursday mornings at the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

For further information about the JHC Social Club, please contact Barbara Sacks on 0404 224 498.

- 1 (I-r) Barbara Sacks, Saba Feniger, Sue Hampel OAM, Abram Goldberg OAM and Adele Pakula
- 2 Megan Goldin and Leon Shulkin
- 3 Lusia Haberfeld and Dr Dvir Abramovich
- 4 (I-r) Jack Ginger, Alice Peer, Barbara Sacks and Eva Graham

## Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre

Goldie Birch







The Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) organisation continues to support the social and educational programs of the Centre

Last August the Friends held a successful fundraiser to contribute to the conservation treatment costs for significant artworks on paper in the JHC Collection. The event was initiated and organised by JHC Board member Mary Slade, who is on the JHC Collections Acquisition Committee and has insight into the behind-the-scenes area of the Archives. Graciously hosted by Jeanne Pratt at her beautiful estate 'Raheen', about 150 Friends attended the evening, demonstrating just how passionate our community is in supporting the work of the JHC Collections. Jayne Josem, Curator and Head of Collections, spoke about Doba-Necha Cukierman, and Dr Anna

Hirsh, Archivist, presented drawings by architect Hermann Baum, which were some of the significant works that have been sent to the University of Melbourne's Grimwade Centre for Cultural Materials Conservation. Similar fundraisers are planned in the future to support the preservation of our precious artefacts.

In November, the Young Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre hosted an end-of-year event, ably organised by Lauren Spitalnic-Majtlis. Guests were treated to supper and were able to wander through the museum, which many had not visited since they were students. Jade Lipson, granddaughter of survivor and museum guide Tuvia Lipson, shared her grandfather's remarkable story of survival with fellow guests. Another highlight of the evening was the attendance of two Jewish young adults who had recently migrated to Australia for work, and the opportunity the event provided for them to meet other young people who were born in Australia.

The purpose of the Young Friends is to bring young adults to the museum and provide the opportunity to reconnect with their Jewish roots. The Young Friends look forward to hosting a number of events this year. Anyone who wishes to become involved or to attend a future event should email Lauren Spitalnic-Majtlis at lspitalnic@hotmail.com.

- 1 (I-r) Mary Slade, Jeanne Pratt AO, AC, Elly Brooks, Sue Lewis and Lauren Spitalnic-Maitlis
- 2 Young Friends at the JHC
- 3 ((I-r) Anna Hirsh, Mary Slade and Jayne Josem

## Become a Friend of the Jewish Holocaust Centre. Support the activities of the Centre.

The Friends of the Jewish Holocaust Centre plays an important role in providing financial support to the Centre through membership subscriptions, raffle book sales, sales of the Entertainment Book and social fundraising functions.

To become a Friend of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, simply download and complete the form from www.jhc.org.au/friends-of-the-jhc.html

For further information please contact Goldie Birch on (03) 9528 1985 or email goldiegb@bigpond.net.au.

























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## Seen around the Centre

- 1: Gandel Holocaust Studies graduates with John Gandel AO, Pauline Gandel and Rabbi James Kennard
- 2: (I-r) Kitia Altman OAM and Helen Mahemoff
- 3: (I-r) Jayne Josem, Prof Leo Spitzer and Prof Marianne Hirsch
- 4: (I-r) Willy Lermer OAM and the Hon Tim Wilson MP
- 5: (I-r) Josh Berenbaum, Pauline Rockman OAM, Warren Fineberg, Avi Paluch, Dr Anna Hirsh, Jayne Josem, Elly Brooks and Prof Michael Berenbaum
- 6: (I-r) Dr Donna-Lee Frieze, Pauline Rockman OAM, Nina Bassat AM and Prof Philippe Sands QC

- 7: (I-r) Bunhom Chhorn, Cr Youhorn Chea, Abram Goldberg OAM, Leaphy Moeung and Heng Moeng
- 8: (I-r) Jayne Josem, Michael Gawenda and Pauline Rockman OAM
- 9: (I-r) Martin Appelby, Jayne Josem and Steven Castan
- 10: (I-r) Helen Mahemoff, Dan Sztrajt, Siegmund Siegreich, Jono Gelfand, Sue Hampel OAM, Fiona Kelmann, Luba Olenski and Luba Goldberg
- 11: (I-r) Beettan Goldberg, Jannine Callaghan, Jordan Callaghan, Alexander Oscar, Charlie Goldberg and Genevieve Callaghan
- 12: Graduates of the 2016 JHC Education Course with Lisa Phillips, Sue Hampel OAM and Dr Bill Anderson

## Bialik's Button Project

### Heidi Meyerson





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While learning about the Holocaust in 2007, Bialik College's Year 4G bilingual Hebrew-English class was profoundly affected by the documentary *Paper Clips*. The students felt that as descendants of Holocaust survivors, they should be honouring their family members who had been murdered during the Shoah. The way they decided to do this was to create their own memorial to commemorate the one and a half million children who were victims of the Nazis. Their teachers, Soni Levinson and Dalia Gurfinkel, embraced their idea and, after a lengthy debate about what item would best represent the murdered children, they settled on buttons – one for each life that was lost. Their rationale was that buttons, like children, come in many different shapes, sizes and colours, and hold a garment together as children hold a family together.

The College supported their project and helped promote the button collection drive to the Bialik community. Collection points were established at the school and at the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC). News of Bialik's button collection drive spread and buttons began to arrive at the school, together with special stories and visits from Holocaust survivors who shared their experiences with the students.

By 2011, approximately 500,000 buttons had been collected. Two Year 4 students, Ben Aizenstros and Benji Krongold, proposed using Perspex cylinders to house the buttons and serve as a memorial to the 1.5 million children. They consulted with staff members at Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre in Israel, who suggested that 21 cylinders be used to represent the 21 pre-Second World War European countries from where the 1.5 million children came. Yad Vashem estimated the number of children murdered in each country, based on a quarter of the total number from these countries. It is a sad but inescapable fact that the numbers cannot be more exact. Bialik therefore decided to add an additional 22<sup>nd</sup> cylinder to 'the lost child', to represent the unknown children, those who were born and died in ghettos... those about whom we wish we knew.

In 2012, the Year 6 Maths Extension Class devised a method

of calculating the size of the cylinders needed, based on the volume of each cylinder and ratio of buttons to centimetres cubed using an estimated average for the size of a button.

After many trials, they settled on an average ratio of 1 button = 1cm³ which would also account for random sizes and spaces between buttons. The cylinders had to be large enough to make sure they could hold the correct number of buttons and, most importantly, each child who had lost their life had to be represented by a button.

By May 2016, the collection numbered 700,000. In a renewed push to reach its goal, Bialik approached the broader community for support. In addition to the button collection box at the JHC, collection boxes were placed in community businesses, community centres and private homes. A number of schools across Australia had button collection days in support of Bialik and with the added help of publicity and social media, buttons once again poured into the school. This time they came from all over Australia and beyond. We received buttons from New Zealand, America, Israel, France and even Minsk in Belarus!

Many dedications and letters of support were posted with the buttons and a book was created to display the letters. A button counting day was held at Bialik in December 2016. By then the collection had surpassed 1.3 million Thanks to the help of the broader community and the continued efforts of Bialik students, staff and parents, the goal of 1.5 million buttons was finally achieved soon after.

Bialik's Button Project installation was formally opened on 17 February 2017.

Heidi Meyerson is Communications and Development Manager at Bialik College.

1 Helen Mahemoff, Jeremy Stowe-Lindner, the Hon Michael Danby MP, the Hon David Southwick MP, the Hon Josh Frydenberg MP and the Hon John Pesuto MP

2 Nathaniel Leighton Photographer: Joseph Feil

## The IHRA meets in Iasi, Romania

### Pauline Rockman OAM and Sue Hampel OAM

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) is an inter-governmental body whose purpose is to place political and social leaders' support behind the need for Holocaust education, remembrance and research both nationally and internationally. There are currently 31 member countries, as well as a range of permanent international partners including the United Nations and UNESCO.

We attended our third IHRA meeting in lasi, Romania in November. Our delegation was headed by Dr Lauren Bain, Australia's deputy Ambassador to Germany. Other attendees included Sydney University's Professor Suzanne Rutland OAM and Dr André Oboler from the Online Hate Prevention Institute.

The meeting incorporated working groups and committees, plenary sessions and visits to two local synagogues and historic sites. We visited the site of the 1941 lasi pogrom where at least 13,266 Jews were killed by Romanian authorities. The old police station, where some Jews were rounded up for the death trains while others were shot in courtyard, now houses a permanent photographic exhibition of the pogrom.

Sue Hampel and Suzanne Rutland delivered a presentation to the Education Working Group (EWG) about the Australian Holocaust survivor community, its role in the preservation of Holocaust memory, and the current state of Holocaust education in Australia's school curricula.

The plenary tackled a wide range of issues, including a new Polish law that aims to punish those 'who publicly and against the facts, accuse the Polish nation, or the Polish state, [of being] responsible [for] or complicit in Nazi crimes committed by the German Reich' with a three-year prison sentence. There was significant concern from IHRA delegates that promulgating this law would stifle legitimate research into Polish involvement in atrocities during the Holocaust.



Jewish Care Victoria launched its Holocaust documentary series, 'Rising From the Ashes', in commemoration of Yom Hashoah last year.

As Melbourne is home to the largest number of Holocaust survivors per capita outside Israel, Jewish Care believed it was crucial to share the survivors' stories to ensure that we will never forget.

The series features interviews with Holocaust survivors who are Jewish Care clients, aged care residents, volunteers and donors.



In another development, the IHRA welcomed the decision of the Czech government to close an industrial pig farm situated on the site of the former concentration camp for Roma at Lety u Pisku. This decision followed a decade-long protest. The IHRA has requested that the site be turned into a respectful and educational place of remembrance.

The next IHRA plenary meeting will be held in Geneva in June 2017

Pauline Rockman and Sue Hampel are Co-Presidents of the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

Photo: (I-r) Prof Suzanne Rutland OAM, Sue Hampel OAM, Pauline Rockman OAM, Dr André Oboler and Dr Lauren Bain

## Rising From the Ashes: Jewish Care's Holocaust documentary series

They emotionally recount their loss of childhood, family, identity and freedom at the hands of Nazi Germany and its collaborators.

The videos aim to highlight how the trauma experienced by Holocaust survivors transcends generations and affects their children and grandchildren.

You can view the video series at www.youtube.com/ jewishcarevic. For more information about Jewish Care's Holocaust Survivor Support Program phone 8517 5999, email info@jewishcare.org.au/nssp.

## Welcome to the JHC library

#### Julia Monique Reichstein





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A library outranks any other one thing a community can do to benefit its people. It is a never failing spring in the desert.

#### Andrew Carnegie

In mid-2017, the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) library, for the first time, will become a public lending service. However, are you familiar with the extensive and specialist resources and services we already offer? And are you aware of the role you can play in the continued growth and development of the JHC Library?

Here is an overview of the resources and services we offer.

The library holds approximately 7000 books in its collection, housed in two spaces within the JHC. Our Main Library, located on the first floor, holds the General Collection, spanning the historical 1933-1953 timeframe. The Main Library also houses a number of special collections. These include locally published Holocaust memoirs, many published through the Lamm Library's 'Makor Write Your Story' program; Yizkor books; the Janusz Korczak collection; the Reference collection which includes encyclopaedias, listings, theses and court transcripts from war crime trials; Holocaust fiction; and young adult Holocaust literature, both fiction and non-fiction.

Our second space, the Satellite Library, is located opposite the Anne Frank room. It holds our foreign language Holocaust titles spanning 12 languages. Our largest language holdings are Dutch, French, German, Hebrew, Polish and Yiddish.

In addition to our collection, the library also provides a number of research services. These are access to the Online Library Catalogue, JHC Collections Online, and to the USC Shoah Foundation's Visual History Archive: Spielberg Shoah Foundation Testimonies.

The JHC's library collection has an online catalogue hosted by the Lamm (formerly Makor) Library's website. A further six Jewish library catalogues, including that of our neighbour, Kadimah Cultural Centre and National Library, are represented on the Lamm Library catalogue: http://lammjewishlibraryaustralia.softlinkhosting.com.au

An exciting milestone for the JHC was the pilot launch last year of

the online portal, 'JHC Collections Online'. This enables visitors to the museum to have a virtual look at our archival, testimonial, art and library collections via designated computer terminals within the library. As the portal continues to evolve, it will become accessible to researchers the world over.

The JHC library is one of six institutions in Australia that can offer researchers direct access to the USC Visual History Archive: Spielberg Shoah Foundation Testimonies, a database comprising more than 50 000 eye-witness Holocaust survivor testimonies filmed around the world. Please contact the library to set up a booking time.

We extend Holocaust research assistance to historians, academics, students and writers *inter alia*. As well as filtering and sourcing reliable material, we are able to call upon our 'walking knowledge bank' – the extensive knowledge and experience of the JHC's survivors, museum guides, volunteers and staff.

We also assist individuals with Holocaust family tracing. The library's role is not to conduct people's investigations, but to equip them with the relevant research tools and know-how so that they can fulfil their objectives.

The library is also privileged to serve as an additional learning space for school groups for the JHC's education program. Since 2015, the library has hosted on average three school groups a week, providing an intimate environment for students to learn about survivor testimony from our survivor guides.

Established in 2012, the JHC Publishing House is committed to the revitalisation, preservation and dissemination of memoirs penned by the Jewish Holocaust Centre's former and current survivor volunteers. Fourteen memoirs have now been reprinted, with a further seven in development.

Julia Monique Reichstein is the JHC librarian. For further information about the library's services please phone (03) 9528 1985 or email JuliaR@jhc.org.au.

1 JHC Main Library

2 Julia Monique Reichstein Photographer: Zina Sofer

## New acquisitions

#### Anna Hirsh







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The following are new additions to the Centre's collection from June – December 2016. We are so appreciative of these rare and important historical documents and artefacts that enhance the historicism of the Holocaust, particularly with their Melbourne connections, which makes the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) Collection unique. Thank you to our donors for their generosity. Donations of original Holocaust artefacts are always welcome, and we also welcome donation of originals where copies were previously donated to the Centre. Please contact JHC's Archivist, Dr Anna Hirsh to make an appointment: annah@jhc.org.au

 A large collection of artefacts from the estate of Jacob & Malvina Keller. Jacob was a slave labourer in Siberia for the majority of the Second World War while Malvina obtained false papers and lived in Poland. This collection includes false identification and baptism papers and numerous photographs.

From the Estate of Jacob and Malvina Keller

2. Leather handbag, cotton nightshirt, and three photographs. The handbag belonging to Malka Bugalksi, filled with photographs, was one of the only possessions Malka took with her as she fled Wolomin, Poland for the Soviet Zone in September 1939. The cotton calico nightshirt, with its monogram 'MB,' belonged to Mendel Bugalski, who also escaped to Soviet territory.

Donor: Gita Ginger and family. Gita is the daughter of Malka and Zelig Bugalski.

3. Leather-bound diary kept by Ilse Ziffer during her time in the Shanghai Ghetto 1941-1945.

Donor: Kath Kolb, daughter of Ilse Ziffer.

4. Four postcards sent to Erna Kindler from her sister Hansi and uncle Simon Bassel. Erna and her family fled to Krakow and later to the Ukraine after the outbreak of the Second World War. Hansi was deported in Maly Trostinec in 1942 and Simon Bassel was deported to Theresienstadt. Neither survived the war.

Donated by Judy Lipshutz, granddaughter of Erna Kindler

5. Fifty-four metal and thread buttons made by Mala Pfeffer, who was incarcerated in the Lodz Ghetto, Auschwitz, Stutthof and Theresienstadt before migrating to Australia.

Donated by Sandra Jones

6. Two Figurines: Tailor and Rabbi, made by Hungarian-born, Israeli artist Magda Watts, who had made dolls from scraps in exchange for food when she was a prisoner in the Siemens labour camp in Nuremberg. Magda has been making 'vanished world' figurines since the 1980s.

Donated by Carolyn and Len Eldridge.

by David George Gilbert (Grunbaum), as well as memoir, books and documents. David, his wife Gisela and Susi were deported to Auschwitz, and only David survived.

Donated by Ruth Hampel, good friend of David Gilbert

8. Two books, *The Fight and Destruction of the Bialystok Ghetto*, Dr Szymon Datner, published in 1946; and *German Crimes in Poland*, Central Commission for Investigation of German Crimes in Poland, Vol. 1, Warsaw, 1946.

Donated by Sue Selwyn and Yvonne Goldbloom, in memory of their parents John and June Selwyn.

 A large collection of documents, photographs and artifacts belonging to Walter Geismar who survived the war in Germany, working in labour factories and not revealing that he was Jewish. (You can read more about Walter's story on page 30 of this magazine.)

Two donors: Godfrey Geismar (Walter's nephew), and Joelle Barnett (Walter's good friend).

 Documents belonging to Aron and Lotte Blumenfeld who both survived the Second World War in a series of concentration and labour camps.

Donated by Ruth Goren, daughter.

11. Gertrude Spencer's photo album with illustrations, covering her early life in Vienna to the family's migration to Tel Aviv, Palestine, in 1936.

Donated by The University of Melbourne, with the assistance of Dr Jennifer Baldwin, School of Historical Studies

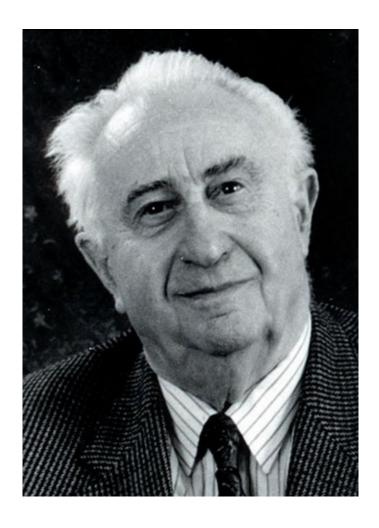
1 Ilse Ziffer's diary

2 Portrait of Susi Grunbaum

3 Figurine 'Tailor' by Magda Watts

## Shmuel Rosenkranz: devoted to his family and the community

Fred Antman



It seems coincidental that two great Jewish leaders passed away almost on the same day: Shimon Peres, a leader of the world Jewry, and Shmuel Rosenkranz, a leader of Australian Jewry.

Shmuel grew up at a time when Austria associated itself with the Nazi era. It was a time when Jewish citizens living in Vienna experienced waves of antisemitism and were persecuted physically and verbally, seeing synagogues desecrated, Jewish shops and homes demolished, and the beastly attack in November 1938 – *Kristallnacht* – which Shmuel witnessed. It was an event that was deeply embedded in Shmuel's mind throughout his entire life.

Shmuel's parents recognised that Jews living in Austria had little future and began the search for safer havens, travelling to Melbourne, Australia, which then became Shmuel's home. Once there, he became an ardent Zionist busying himself forming a youth group called Habonim. It was there that he met a girl by the name of Betty Alexander and together they gathered together young Jewish youths, instilling in them Zionist ideals. This love partnership lasted for 63 years.

Shmuel was a devoted husband, loving father to Judith and

Ron, a passionate father-in-law to Leon, adoring grandfather and great-grandfather, and caring brother. The loss of his daughter Judith through ill health and the loss of his wife Betty devastated him.

Making his living in the clothing business, Shmuel set his sights on involving himself with leadership roles serving the Jewish community.

His communal career spanned about 60 years as he became the president of organisations including the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, the Jewish Community Council of Victoria (formerly the Victorian Board of Deputies), the United Jewish Education Board, the State Zionist Council, Bialik College and the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC).

As president of the JHC he spoke to secondary school and university students, ensuring that they all heard of the tragic events of the Holocaust where six million of our people were brutally murdered by the Nazis.

With his ongoing achievements he received numerous awards for his lifetime voluntary work, including the Sir John Monash award, a B'nai B'rith Menorah award, and a multicultural affairs ward. He was an eloquent speaker, always in demand to speak to school groups and public forums.

My contact with Shmuel began when he presided as president of the Elwood Talmud Torah Synagogue. He spent 13 years in that capacity, then handing the baton to me. I spent the next 23 years as president under the helm of the dynamic Rabbi Chaim Gutnick. With Shmuel's help and wisdom we created the golden years of Elwood.

Shmuel and I enjoyed a lifelong friendship. We laughed together and we cried together and our bond was strong. His passing is not only a monumental loss to his family and to me, but a huge loss to the entire Jewish Australian community.

Fred Antman was a close friend of Shmuel Rosenkranz. This is an edited version of the obituary that was first published in the Australian Jewish News, based on a eulogy delivered at a minyan for Shmuel.

Photo: Shmuel Rosenkranz

## Max Stern leaves his stamp

#### Peter Kohn



The Jewish community, stamp collectors and soccer enthusiasts are mourning Melbourne stamp and coin dealer and Holocaust survivor Max Stern, who died last year aged 95.

The great-grandfather, who was a Member of the Order of Australia (AM), told *The AJN* that because of his 14 great-grandchildren, 'I know I have truly survived.'

Born in Slovakia, Stern began philately as a student, helping support his family by selling stamps. With Jews in Nazioccupied Bratislava prohibited from owning businesses, Stern transferred his business to a non-Jew who obtained forged papers for him. But he was sent to a labour camp in Zilina in 1943 and was readied for transport to Auschwitz, yet eluded authorities.

On Yom Kippur 1944, the Nazis rounded up Bratislava's Jews, and Stern's family was later sent to Auschwitz. Stern himself hid with friends, but was captured and taken to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Near the war's end, he was on a death march towards Berlin.

While two sisters survived, his parents, two younger brothers and most of his aunts and uncles perished.

In 1948, Stern married survivor Eva Rosenthal and they immigrated to Australia, where he founded Max Stern & Co in Melbourne's CBD. He later wrote an autobiography – *My Stamp On Life*.

In 2010, Max Stern & Co partnered with B'nai B'rith's Raoul Wallenberg Unit to issue stamps honouring the Swedish diplomat who saved tens of thousands of Jews. Judi Schiff, who coordinated the Wallenberg project, paid tribute to Stern,

who used his contacts at Australia Post. 'Max had a wonderful manner and he could influence people to do things.'

Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) education director Lisa Phillips said Stern, who spoke at the 2015 Yom Hashoah commemoration, was 'truly an inspirational man, much loved and with an indomitable spirit.' Speaking weekly to students at the JHC, 'he captivated his audiences by sharing his testimony.'

North Caulfield Football Club committee member Harvey Silver said Stern, a life member, was 'one in a million'. 'Never have I met or will I meet a person with such zest for life. Still playing soccer into his 90s, working daily at his stamp shop in Melbourne at 94, generous, always with a smile on his face.

'Max revelled in his status as the oldest registered football player in Australia,' said Silver, 'and will be truly missed at North Caulfield, where he was an icon and role model.'

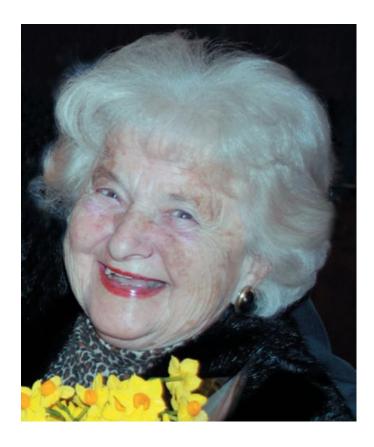
Peter Kohn is a journalist with the Australian Jewish News (AJN). This obituary was first published in the AJN.

Photo: Max Stern AM

Photographer: Peter Haskin, Australian Jewish News

## Sonia Wajsenberg: a legacy of optimism

#### Bernard Korbman OAM



Intelligent, cultured, with a great sense of humour, full of grace, beauty and dignity, compassionate, empathetic and fun-loving

All of these words, although fitting the late Sonia Wajsenberg well, do not do her justice. Sonia's essence was captured in her eyes. Those wonderful, beautiful eyes truly were the windows to her soul. They captured the essence of this complex, gifted woman who faced her challenges with superhuman effort.

Sonia was born in 1923 in Bialystok, Poland. Her grandfather owned a substantial timber mill and hers was a large extended family. Sonia survived the Holocaust thanks to her husband Mietek, her mother-in-law and several Poles who helped them. Mietek smuggled Sonia out of the Bialystok Ghetto in 1943 and they survived the remainder of the Second World War living in Warsaw on Aryan papers. Apart from her aunt Rochl who had immigrated to Melbourne in 1939, her entire family, including her six-year-old sister Alla, was murdered by the Nazis. Rochl brought Sonia and Mietik to Australia after the war to begin a new life. Sonia always found the good in people and considered herself to be lucky.

Although she had suffered unbelievable loss, when she spoke of her youth and of Mietik, her white knight in shining armour, Sonia's eyes twinkled. At those times, standing before me was a young woman not only full of joy and laughter, but also a woman of fight, strength and resilience.

Sonia was involved at the Jewish Holocaust Centre from its inception. She was a very special guide, as were all the members of the 'Tuesday Team', consisting of Sonia, Rosa Krakowski, Halina Zylberman, Pearl Recht and Willy Lermer.

Sonia was able to tailor her presentation according to her audience. She had a special appreciation of the notion of duty of care towards the students who attended the Centre. She did not want to frighten children and managed to talk about horrendous events without graphic descriptions. Sonia knew how to gain the students' attention, especially when she talked about 'running away with her boyfriend' who had come to save her. After her presentation she was the most hugged guide I ever saw. Students cried with her, and wanted to know more about her boyfriend. However, above all else, they were no longer listening to just a history lesson given by an old lady. Instead they were engaging with a person who made time and generations disappear, and whose message was always about the sanctity of human life and the dignity of humankind.

It was a pleasure to work with Sonia. We all know that staff meetings can sometimes be a little brutal, but if Sonia wanted to discuss an issue, she would not wait for a meeting. She preferred to discuss things with the Tuesday Team or with me on a one-to-one basis, and in this way we were always able to resolve the issue at hand.

When Sonia became unwell but was still able to attend the Holocaust Centre, the Tuesday Team was absolutely devoted to her. They made sure that someone was with her at all times, took her out to lunch every Tuesday, as had been their tradition for many years, and called a taxi to take her home.

All who were privileged to know Sonia – including those students and adults who passed through the Centre or heard her speak at other places – will remember her legacy of optimism in a sometimes dark world; her belief that human beings are basically good; and her conviction that people should never be treated as a means to an end, but rather as an end in themselves.

Bernard Korbman OAM is the former Executive Director of the Jewish Holocaust Centre.

Photo: Sonia Wajsenberg

## Willy Lermer: a life of commitment and integrity

#### Pauline Rockman OAM



For over two decades, Wilhelm (Willy) Lermer was involved in the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC), where he was not only a guide and Board member, but became so much a part of the lives of so many at the Centre.

In Willy's recently published memoir From Hell to Salvation is written:

Willy

Our survivor.

A story of such inhumanity

Told with such

Humanity

Like Nelson Mandela

He seems to embody Joy

Optimism

Forgiveness

Reconciliation.

He brings us

Together

as

One people -

Australians

With the responsibility to

'Remember the past and change the Future.'

These words were written by a teacher who visited the JHC with her students and was guided by Willy Lermer, and reflect so well the Willy we knew and loved.

Willy's book was launched at the JHC in February. It tells the story of his happy childhood in Krakow with his parents Herschel and

Chana and his younger sister Dusia; his extraordinary battle for survival through the horrors of the Shoah – the Krakow ghetto, slave labour and a succession of concentration camps; and his courage and resilience in starting a new life in Australia in the face of the devastating loss of his entire family. It serves as a testament to the power of hope and contains that ever-present reminder of the threat that racism and hatred present to the world.

On the day of the book launch, Willy was made a Life Governor of the Board of the JHC and received a standing ovation from the large audience. Only the second certificate of Life Governorship to be presented by the JHC board, the honour was in recognition of and appreciation of his outstanding commitment and support for the JHC as a long-serving board member, representing the volunteer survivor guides, presenting their vision, their needs, their complaints, their *eytzes*. For well over ten years he was a contributing Board member, hardly missing a meeting.

Willy was part of that precious group of survivors involved in the establishment and running of the JHC. As a survivor guide for 25 years, Willie established and nurtured deep and lasting relationships with many who had the good fortune to meet him. Letters he received from students over the years, as well as enduring contacts with Holocaust memorial institutions in Poland and in Germany abound. He also worked in the JHC archives department for many years translating and cataloguing Polish documents. In 2015 he was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in recognition of his work.

For Willy, the JHC was much more than a place to commemorate and educate the world about the horrors of the Shoah. He would say: 'The Jewish Holocaust Centre is very important both to me and other survivors, not just as a place of education and remembrance. It serves as that place where I can properly mourn and commemorate my family, my family murdered in the Shoah, who have no graves. It is the gravestone of my family.' Willy had a plaque placed in the JHC commemorative room and each year would light a candle on the anniversary of the death of his parents, sister and grandparents.

As a board member, Willy helped to oversee the transition of the JHC from a small volunteer-staffed and operated grass roots organisation to the vibrant centre it is today. As a survivor, he carried that mantle of responsibility with grace and a serious sense of purpose, but always with warmth and a great sense of humour, and always with a story to tell.

Willy was so loved and so valued and the JHC is sincerely grateful for his care, empathy, respect, commitment and integrity. His life story and its positive messages have left an inedible mark not only on all who knew him at the Holocaust Centre but on tens of thousands of students and others whom he addressed. Willy was a veritable icon and it was a privilege to have met him and worked with him

We know that his passing has left a huge gap in the lives of his family and we extend our condolences to his daughter Anne, his companion Halina, to all the other members of his family and to his many friends at the Jewish Holocaust Centre. He is greatly missed

Pauline Rockman is Co-President of the Jewish Holocaust Centre. This is an edited version of the eulogy she delivered at a minyan held to mark Willy Lermer's passing.

Photo: Willy Lermer

## Mazal Tov

#### **Engagements**

To Renata and David Gelb on the engagement of their daughter Hannah Gelb to Marcus Alexander

To Tuvia Lipson on the engagement of his granddaughter Jade Lipson to Joshua Zajonc

To Debbie and Leon Mandel on the engagement of their daughter Lauren Mandel to Phillip Wein

#### **Marriages**

To Beryl and Trevor Chitiz on the marriage of their daughter Gaby Chitiz to Chris Cahill

To Anna and Ralph Glezer on the marriage of their son Paul Glezer to Natalie Birman

To Irma Hanner on the marriage of her granddaughter Lena Hanner to Matt laconesso

To Ariella Leski on her marriage to Josh Lipshutz

To Fryda Schweitzer on the marriage of her grandson Zvi Schweitzer to Abbey Eddington

To Zvi Schweitzer on his marriage to Abbey Eddington

To Sue and Ron Unger on the marriage of their son Marc Unger to Bianca Miller

To Marika and Allen Brostek on the birth of their grandson Levi Forgasz

#### **Births**

To Ursula Flicker OAM on the birth of her great grandson Levi Forgasz

To Jenna and Paul Kegen on the birth of their daughter Isla Kegen

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To Riva and Harvey Same on the birth of their granddaughter Rose Margaret Same

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#### Bar Mitzvah

To Julie Cohen on the bar mitzvah of her grandson Toby Sher

#### **Birthdays**

To Tosca Birnbaum on her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday
To Eva Layton on her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday
To Silvana Layton on her 70<sup>th</sup> birthday
To Joe Spring on his 90th birthday
To Moshe Fiszman on his 95<sup>th</sup> birthday

#### In Memoriam

In loving memory of my father Adaś Hasman and my little brother Rysio, both of whom perished in the Holocaust.

Loved forever. Never forgotten.

Lusia Haberfeld

## Condolences

To Susie Aladjem on the death of her father Ruwen Lewkowicz

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To Hayley and David Southwick MP on the death of their father-in-law and father Stuart Southwick OAM

To Anne Sztajer on the death of her father Wilhelm (Willy) Lermer OAM

To Sue and Ron Unger on the death of their mother-in-law and mother Pesia Unger

To Jenny Wajsenberg on the death of her mother Sonia Wajsenberg

## Become a Partner in Remembrance

The Jewish Holocaust Centre Foundation ensures the continued existence of the Centre and supports its important work. Funds raised through the Foundation are invested, with the earnings providing an ongoing source of income for the Centre to support its operations and programs into the future.

For more information on how you can help support the Foundation and how your support will be recognised, please contact Helen Mahemoff, Chair of the Foundation on 0417 323 595 or Email: jhcfoundation@bigpond.com.





## Many thanks: Jewish Holocaust Centre and Jewish Holocaust Centre Foundation supporters

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### Simcha Donations

We are pleased to add our mazal Tov to the following people who requested gifts to the Jewish Holocaust Centre and the Jewish Holocaust Foundation in lieu of gifts on their special occasion.

The Simchas listed occurred between 1 January 2015 and 1 January 2016.

Bella Becher 70th Birthday 90th Birthday Emma Gvorki Eva Layton 70th Birthday 70th Birthday Silvana Layton 69th Birthday Danny Oberklayd Judy Resofsky 90th Birthday Marcus Rose 70th Birthday Miriam Tisher 70th Birthday Piry Weiss 90th Birthday

## Walter Geismar: sharing his memories in a welcoming space

Anna Hirsh



In addition to its museum and education program, one of the crucial reasons for the founders to establish the Jewish Holocaust Centre (JHC) was to create a safe and welcoming space, a social environment for survivors to gather and to be able to talk freely about their experiences with fellow survivors who could truly empathise with them.

The late Walter Geismar was one such survivor who viewed the JHC as a community place, a welcoming home away from home. Walter first came to the JHC in need of some technical assistance from Testimonies Department Director, Phillip Maisel OAM. The two men soon became firm friends, sharing details of their experiences with mutual understanding. Over a period spanning 15 years, Walter visited on an-almost weekly basis, spending Tuesday afternoons talking with Phillip and other volunteers. Within a compassionate environment, he felt that he could speak freely about his experiences during the Holocaust. This not only provided him with release from his traumatic memories, but enabled him to forge new friendships. A thoughtful and generous man, Walter regularly brought chocolates and gifts for his friends.

We are very fortunate that Walter's story was captured by Phillip's camera, and that his testimony exemplifies the objectives of the JHC: to ensure that each recorded story presents the effects of the Holocaust on the individual, and also honours the memory of those who are no longer with us. In the Archives we have a collection of Walter Geismar's artefacts, material proof of his experiences.

Walter Geismar was one of few Jewish people to have survived the duration of the Holocaust in Germany. Born in 1923 in Schrobenhausen, near Munich, he was the youngest of three brothers. His mother Anna (née Mertan) had converted from Catholicism to Judaism after her marriage to his father Ludwig, who had come from an observant Orthodox Jewish home. She was forced, however, to convert back to Catholicism during the Second World War.

As Hitler rose to power during the early 1930s, Walter experienced anti-Jewish prejudice, both from his teachers and from most of his classmates, who beat him regularly.

Walter's brothers left Germany before the war. His brother Gustav was arrested in November 1938 on *Kristallnacht*, incarcerated at Dachau, but fortunately released through bribes. He escaped to the UK from where he was deported to Australia on the infamous *Dunera*. Despite deportation, Gustav embraced his new life in Australia and, after the war, was the key reason for the Geismars' immigration to Melbourne. Richard, the middle son, had moved to New Zealand earlier in 1938, and was incarcerated during the war at Somes Island as an enemy alien.

Meanwhile, for the duration of the war in Germany, Walter and his parents experienced constant hardships, hiding and relocating frequently. They survived through luck and with the assistance of people who opposed the Nazi ideology. Walter worked as a slave labourer in a battery factory and in metal fabrication, often escaping punishment through sheer Providence. At one of the labour camps, Walter fell in love with a girl named Ilse Nussbaum. Most of his friends, including Ilse, were deported from the labour camps to their deaths. Walter managed to evade these deportations, but lived in constant fear, along with the relentless bombings of Munich, in close proximity to where he worked.

After the war Walter and his parents immigrated to Melbourne, where they were reunited with Gustav, who served as their sponsor.

I was fortunate to meet Walter late in October 2015, when he described his experiences with a quiet dignity. It was to be his final visit to the JHC, only months before his passing. He is survived by his wife, Judy, and his nephews and nieces. It was wonderful to meet recently with Walter's nephew, his brother Richard's son Godfrey, and with Godfrey's children. They have very generously donated many photographs and provided the JHC with information that further illustrate the family history and experiences.

The Jewish Holocaust Centre was named as a recipient of a generous bequest from Walter Geismar. The Centre is grateful for his support, which will assist us in continuing our important work in Holocaust education and combatting racial intolerance.

For further information about leaving a bequest, please contact Reuben Zylberszpic: ReubenZ@jhc.org.au or phone: 9528 1985.

Dr Anna Hirsh is the JHC Archivist. She was assisted in writing this article by Phillip Maisel OAM, JHC Director of Testimonies, Godfrey Geismar, and Walter Geismar's friend, Joelle Barnett.

Photo: (I-r) Phillip Maisel OAM and Walter Geismar

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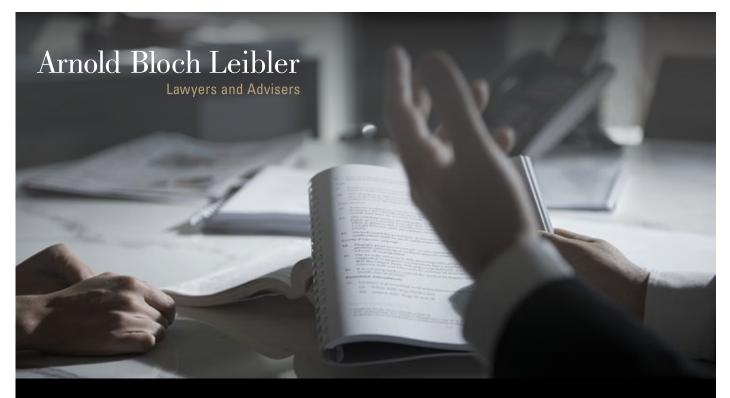
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דערקלערט זי. "די מערדער זענען געווען פּשוטע מענטשן, אַנאַלפאַבעטן אָדער מיט צוויי קלאַסן שול בילדונג." קען זײַן אַז זיי זענען געווען אין צערקווע און דאָרט געהערט פון אַנדערע אַז מען דאַרף דאָס אויספירן, אַז דאָס זענען די אָנזאָגן פון גאָט. און די צערקווע האָט געשוויגן. אַזוי דערקלערט די שרײַבערין פון בוך. קומט אויס לויט אירע רייד אַז דאָס איז געווען די אָפיציעלע פּאָזיציע פון דער ליטווישער מאַכט.

אין יאָר 2011 האָט דער ליטווישער צענטער געפאָרשט דעם גענאָסיד פון די אײַנוואוינער און דעם ווידערשטאַנד. דער צענטער האָט צוזאַמענגעשטעלט אַ רשימה פון 2555 מענטשן וועלכע האָבן מעגלעך אָנטיילגענומען אין דעם גענאַסיד. די רשימה איז געוואָרן איבערגעגעבן דער מאַכט. וואו איז די רשימה איצט?

אינצווישן קומט פאָר אין רוסלאַנד " אַ װאָך פון געדענקען", געװידמעט דעם חורבן. דער אינטערנאַציאָנאַלער טאָג פון געדענקען די קרבונות װערט אָפּגעמערקט דורך די 'פאַראייניקטע פעלקער', דער טאָג װען די רױטע אַרמיי האָט באַפרײַט אױשװיץ דעם 27סטן יאַנואַר. דאָס איז געװאָרן דער װיכטיקסטער סימבאָל פון חורבן, די מאסן פאַרניכטונג פון דער ייִדישער באַפעלקערונג בעת דער צװייטער װעלט מלחמה. אין 1941, אױף דער טעריטאָריע פון די לאַגערן, איז אױפגעשטעלט געװאָרן אַ מוזײ, װאָס האָט אײַנגעזאַמלט אַלע רשימות.

דאָס דײַטשע מיליטער איז אַרײַן אין ליטע דעם 22סטן יוני 1941 און פאַרכאַפּט די גאַנצע טעריטאָריע אין איין איין אואָך. דערווײַל זענען די ייִדן, וועלכע האָבן זיך פאַרנומען אויף מזרח אין די פוסטריט פון דער אָפּטרעטנדיקער רויטער אַרמיי, פאַרבליבן אין ליטע, בלויז דערפאַר ווײַל די גרענעץ וועכטער האָבן זיי ניט דורכגעלאָזט דורך דער אַלטער סאָוויעטישער גרענעץ. אַ סך פון זיי זענען אומגעקומען פון די באָמבאַרדירונגען. אין דער ווירקלעכקײַט האָבן זיך געראַטעוועט 15 טויזנט ייִדן. אַ סך פון די זענען דערמאָרדעט געוואָרן פון די ליטווישע נאַציאָנאַליסטן.

לויט די אָנגעגעבענע סטאַטיסטיק פון דער אינטערנאַציאָנאַלער קאָמיסיע פון פאָרשן די פאַרברעכנס פון די נאַציס לויט די אָנגעגעבענע סטאַטיסטיק פון דער אינטערנאַציאָנאַלער קאָמיסיע פון פאָרבונות פון 200 טויזנט ביז 260 אין דעם סאָוויעטיש אָקופּירטן רעזשים אין ליטע, באַשטייען די אַלגעמיינע צאָל קרבונות פון דער אויספאָרשונג איז טויזנט פון פּוילן, 5000 ייִדן פון עסטרײַך און דײַטשלאַנד, 878 ייִדן פון פראַנקרײַך. פון דער אויספאָרשונג איז באַוואוסט וועגן 200 ערטער פון פאַרניכטונג פון 100 טויזנט מענטשן.

אין יאָר 1959 האָבן אין ליטע געלעבט 16 טויזנט ייִדן. אין רעזולטאַט פון דער עמיגראַציע קײַן ישראל זענען אין ליטע געבליבן פיר טויזנט ייִדן.

באַמערקונג פון איבערזעצער: פּאַוועל מאָראָזאָוו: אין די 20ער יאָרן האָט די סאָוויעטישע מאַכט דורכגעפירט רעוויזיעס בײַ פּויערים אין די דערפער, זוכנדיק באַהאַלטענע תבואה. דער ייִנגל פּאַוועל מאָראָזאָוו, האָט געוויזן די זוכער דאָס אָרט וואו זײַן טאַטע האָט באַהאַלטן קאָרן. דער ייִנגל איז געוואָרן אַ נאַציאָנאַלער העלד און מיט לויב געזאַנגען גערימט דורך דער סאָוויעטישער פּרעסע. אין דעם דאָזיקן כאָר האָט זיך אויך געהערט די שטים פון פּאָעט איציק פעפער:"דו האָסט פאַרראַטן דײַן טאַטן, איז גוט אַזוי, איז גוט אַזוי." דעם ייִנגל האָבן די פּויערים פון דאָרף דערמאָרדעט.

.2016 די אָפּשאַצונג פון בוך איז געווען געדרוקט אין דער רוסישער צײַטונג 'פּאַנאָראַמאַ' אין מעלבורן אין חודש פעברואַר איבערגעזעצט פון מ.א.

### עלי וויזעל

דער טויט פון עלי וויזעל האָט אַקטיוויזירט די גאַנצע ליבעראַלע וועלט פּרעסע. יעדער האָט דערפילט די באַדערפעניש עפּעס וואָס צו זאָגן וועגן דעם נפטר. זײַן וועג פון קאָנצענטראַציע לאַגער ביז דער נאָבעל פּרעמיע און זײַנע אידייען האָבן באַײַנפלוסט די אינטעלעקטועלע וועלט זיך אָפּצורופן אויף דעם, וואָס האָט אָנגערירט זייער אינערלעכע וועלט און זייערע גײַסטיקע האָריזאָנטן און זיך סאָלידאַריזירן מיט זײַן מאָראַלישן צוגאַנג צו פּראָבלעמען. מיר שטעלן זיך אָפּ אויף דער "ניו יאָרקער טײַמז" וואָס האָט אייגנטלעך אויסגעדריקט דאָס וואָס יעדער ליבעראַלער מענטש האָט געפילט מיטן פאַרלוסט פון עלי וויזעל. פּרעזידענט אָבאַמאַ, וואָס האָט באַזוכט דעם בוכענוואַלדער קאָנצענטראַציע לאַגער צוזאַמען מיט עלי וויזעל, אין יאַנואַר 2009, האָט אים אָנגערופן: אַ 'לעבעדיק אַנדענק'.

### די ייִדן אין ליטע – דער חורבן און די ליטווינער

די ליטווישע שרײַבערין רוטאַ װאַנאַגאַיָטע האָט אַרױסגעלאָזן אַ בוך װעגן אָנטייל פון די ליטװינער אין חורבן פון די ליטװישע ייִדן. די ליטװינער האָבן זיך באַקלאָגט אױף דער שרײַבערין , װײַל די אָרטיקע האָבן געזאָגט "אַז די ליטװישע ייִדן. די ליטװינער האָבן זיך באַקלאָגט אױף דער שרײַבערין , װײַל די אָרטיקע האָבן זיך אָפּגעקערט פון איך האָב זײ פאַרקױפט און איך באַװײַז זיך װי פּאװעל מאָראָזאָװ און אַז געװיסע פרײַנד האָבן זיך אָפּגעקערט פון מיר און אַז די ייִדן האָבן סובסידירט דאָס אַרױסגעבן דאָס בוך." אפילו דער גײַסטלעכער האָט, לױט די רײד פון װאַנאַגאַיָטע, צוגעזאָגט אַז ער װעט פאַר איר צומאַכן די טיר.

אין בוך 'אונדזערע' ווערט דערציילט וועגן דעם, ווי אין ליטע האָט מען פאַרניכטעט די ייִדן. אַ סך פון זיי זענען געווען אַריבערגעבראַכטע פון אַנדערע לענדער. די קירכע האָט אָפּגעשאַצט די צאָל און זי, וואַנאַגאַיטע, האָט דאָס איבערהויפּט ניט גענומען אין אַכט. אינגאַנצן האָט מען דערהרגעט איבער 200 טויזנט ייִדן... אין ליטע האָט מען ניט דערוואַרט דאָס דאָזיקע בוך. אין דערהרגענען האָבן אָנטייל גענומען אפילו שול קינדער. דערפאַר האָט זי אַנגעשריבן דאָס בוך, דערקלערט וואַנאַגאַיטע. לויט איר מיינונג האָט קיין אַנדערער ניט געקאָנט אָנשרײַבן דאָס בוך אויף דער טעמע. אין ליטע האָט מען מורא געהאַט און קודם איז אויך ניט געווען קיין געלט. "אינגיכן וועלן אַלע אויסשטאַרבן און די קומענדיקע דורות פון מײַנע קינדער וועלן ניט האָבן קיין אינטערעס און קיין עדות וועלן ניט בלײַבן. דעריבער האָב איך אָפּגעזוכט די עדות כּל זמן זיי לעבן נאָך. איך האָב דערפילט אַ מין חוב פאַר מײַן משפּחה."

דאָס דערהרגענען ייִדן האָט זיך ניט באַגרענעצט צו איין ראַיאָן. די גאַנצע ליטווישע פּראָווינץ איז פאַרזייט מיט קברים, באַשטעטיקט די שריַיבערין, פאַררופנדיק זיך ניט בלויז אויף אירע דערפאַרונגען, נאָר אויך אויף דער פאָרשונג פון ליטווישע היסטאָריקער. אַ סך זענען גרייט געווען צו דערציילן שוידערלעכע אינצידענטן. לויט די ווערטער פון וואַנאַגאַיִטע, האָט מען אַרויסגעריסן די גאָלדענע ציין פון טויטע קערפּערס פון די ייִדן. דאָס גאָלד האָט מען צעשמאָלצן און באַנוצט אויסצואַרבעטן ניַיע ציין און קאָראָנקעס. אַ טייל פון אירע דערציילער האָבן אָבער געזאָגט אַז זייערע דערפאַרונגען זאָלן בלײַבן אַנאָנים. זיי האָבן מורא געהאַט. זיי האָבן געזאָגט אַז מען וועט קומען און זיי דערהרגעגען. ווער וועט דערהרגענען? די ליטווינער, האָט דערקלערט די פרוי.

אין גאַנץ ליטע זענען געווען אַרום 50 טויזנט היַיזער וואָס האָבן געהערט צו ייִדן, פּלוס סינאַגאָגן, שפּיטעלער, מאַגאַזינען. וואו איז אַהינגעקומען דער ייִדישער פאַרמעגן? פרעגט וואַנאַגאַיָטע. גאַנץ ליטע האָט זיך באַריַיכערט,

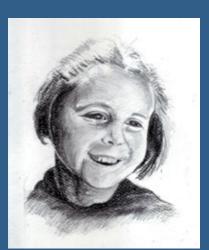


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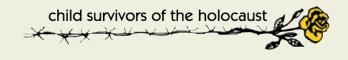


## Child Survivors of the Holocaust. Portraits by Jeffrey Kelson

A tribute to the dignity, fortitude and resilience of Melbourne Child Survivors of the Holocaust

3 – 16 April 2017





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