

child survivors of the holocaust

CONNECTIONS

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Dear Child Survivors,
We trust you and yours are going well. Winter is well and truly upon us and it is difficult at times with so much going on in the world around us to find something to smile about. Understanding it is not that easy to venture out, we are very grateful for the support Child Survivors are showing for the **CSH Coffee Club**. Every first Wednesday of each month brings more of our group together at the RSL for coffee, cake and a shmooze: It's a first-class reunion and a joy to be present. We published **Dr Paul Valent OAM** and **Dr Louis Roller's Royal Commission into Antisemitism and Social Cohesion**, submissions. **Ruth Scheuer OAM** has now shared her powerful, recent submission. We would be pleased to publish any CSH Royal Commission

submissions; please send to viv.parry@bigpond.com

Garry Fabian reflects on his time spent in Germany visiting schools, speaking about his Child Survivor journey. Garry shares his thoughts after forty years' experience.

Dr Breann Fallon, CEO of the Melbourne Holocaust Museum writes to Child Survivors about the MHM submission to the Royal Commission into Antisemitism, we are grateful to Breann for her ongoing support and interest in our group.

Til we meet again, sending you and yours our warmest wishes.



Viv Parry & Lena Fisman
Co-Presidents

Lena's Desk

Reunited after 80 years, two child survivors light a memorial torch at Auschwitz

by Etgar Lefkovits



Hannah Yakin and Ben Gazan reunited.

The daughter of a Dutch rescuer and the infant he saved meet at the March of the Living in Poland.

For eight decades, Holocaust survivor Hannah Yakin, 93, wondered what happened to the baby boy who turned up outside a neighbour's home in suburban Amsterdam during World War II with some clothes, blankets, a

hot water bottle and buttermilk powder.

"I never forgot him because I loved him so much," Yakin told JNS this week during the annual March of the Living Holocaust commemoration in Poland.

The little girl of nine who had played with the baby for two years in the garden of their home more than eight decades ago was finally reunited with the wartime infant—now 83 years old—last year, when an Amsterdam park was named after her late father, Jan van Hulst, a member of the Dutch resistance who was posthumously

recognized in 1997 as a Righteous Among the Nations by the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial for saving Jews during the Holocaust.

This week, the two elderly survivors—the daughter of the resistance member and the baby whom her father had saved—were together again and jointly lit a memorial torch at a Holocaust Remembrance Day ceremony at Auschwitz-Birkenau in honor of the non-Jews who saved Jews during the Holocaust.

"I lost him once. I will never lose him again," Yakin said as they embraced in tears ahead of the event.

'You cannot imagine what it is like'

It was December 1942 when the baby boy was placed in an open suitcase outside a house in the suburban Amsterdam district of Amstelveen, next to the home of the van Hulsts.

"Like Moses was dropped in a basket, I was dropped in a suitcase with some milk," Ben Gazan, 83, recounted in an interview with JNS.

"On Tuesday evening, the doorbell rang at the address at Rodenburghlaan 27," a local Dutch newspaper reported

at the time. "When the lady opened the door, she discovered a package on the sidewalk that turned out to contain a 6-day-old baby boy. With the package were clothes, blankets and woollen baby items, a metal hot water bottle, and a few packets of Nutricia buttermilk powder."

The report continued: "The residents of the property have lovingly taken in the child. The police are conducting an investigation."

The baby was raised by the foster family. The little girl next door—whose father became known for forging papers for Jews, a practice he started with his Jewish wife, as well as hiding them during the wartime years—would play with him in their garden.

"They let me take him in my doll cart and play with him in the garden," Hannah Yakin recounted. "He was like a live doll for me."

The van Hulsts moved away after the war ended, while baby Ben was raised by his foster family for another five years and later reunited with his biological mother, who recognized him one day in the neighbourhood park.

In the meantime, Yakin immigrated to Israel in 1956 and settled in Jerusalem, where she married and started a

large family, but never forgot the baby of her childhood.

"All my life, I never forgot him, and I had asked many times if people knew what had become of him," Yakin recounted, noting that she had received false reports over the years that he was in Israel.

Last year, she was notified that a park in Amsterdam was being named after her late father for his heroism, and she again inquired after the baby boy. The two reunited for the first time in more than eight decades at the ceremony and again this week in Poland.

"Moving is not the word," Yakin said. "You cannot imagine what it is like."

"My father taught us that being good is something normal," she said, recalling his reluctance ever to be recognized for his wartime heroism. "He didn't think one should receive a prize for doing something good."

Standing at the site of the unmarked graveyard of more than 1 one million Jews murdered at Auschwitz, she said: "From my parents I learned that even in the darkest times we are responsible for our choices."

Etgar Lefkovits

Reprinted from Jewish News Syndicate (JNS)

Photo by Yossi Zeliger.

CSH Coffee club - Wednesday June 3rd

We were delighted to host CSH guests: Louis Roller, Bernadette Gore, Andre Dubrowin, Kathy Blecher, Suzie Varti, Halina Leitch, Sarah and Paul Grinwald, Claude Sanicki, Gary Fabian, Jo Keren (First visit CSH) Anne Josephsburg (volunteer)

We look forward to seeing everyone on **Wednesday July 1st, RSL St Georges Rd Elsternwick: 10.30 am till 12.00 pm** to welcome home Dita Gould from her recent trip to Israel and to congratulate Dr Paul Valent OAM on his wonderful award.



Dr Breann Fallon: MHM Submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism



Dear Child survivors,
Dr Breann Fallon, CEO of the MHM, writes about the museum's submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism.

At its core, the submission argues that MHM is more than a museum. It is civic

infrastructure that plays a vital role in confronting antisemitism, strengthening social cohesion, and supporting democratic resilience in Australia. This work is grounded in decades of Holocaust education, testimony, and survivor voices that continue to speak powerfully into today's context.

Drawing on more than forty years of experience, the submission positions Holocaust education as a form of preventative social policy. It builds empathy, strengthens critical thinking, and helps people recognise the consequences of prejudice before it takes hold. The impact is evident across schools, teacher training, workplace programs, and public engagement. Independent evaluation shows that in 2025, 97% of students and teachers who participated in MHM programs reported being moved to reflect on and change their behavior.

The submission also acknowledges the growing pressures on the Museum community in the context of rising antisemitism, including increased security

risks, online abuse, and wellbeing impacts on staff and survivors. It highlights the need for sustained structural support for institutions working at the frontline of education and remembrance.

MHM makes the following recommendations:

- Establishing a National Holocaust Education Standards Framework
- Creating an ongoing funding stream for Holocaust museums as core national infrastructure
- Formally designating MHM as a Centre of Excellence for Holocaust Education
- Establishing dedicated national security funding for at-risk institutions
- Embedding social cohesion and antisemitism training across public institutions
- Supporting workforce wellbeing in frontline educational and cultural organisations
- Creating a National Holocaust testimony and audiovisual archive

The Museum was also honoured to host the Royal Commission's Community Engagement Team, who met with staff and survivors and observed programs including *The Space Between*. MHM looks forward to the Commission's findings, hopeful they will reflect both urgency and the enduring importance of education as prevention.

Kind regards,

Dr Breann Fallon, CEO
Melbourne Holocaust Museum

Richard Rosen OAM

Our much loved and admired fellow CSH, **Richard Rozen OAM** is unwell and in hospital at this time. If you would like to send a message to Richard, please email to: rozenr@bigpond.com.

RUTH SCHEUER OAM - Submission to the Royal Commission on Antisemitism and Social Cohesion.

Date of Birth: 3rd August 1934.

I am a 92-year-old Holocaust survivor, stroke survivor, cancer survivor, stoning survivor! In 1938, at the age of four in Poznan, Poland I was wearing a warm, white, rabbit coat. A group of Polish louts were wearing rags in the middle of the freezing winter. Fueled by jealousy, the angry children kept stoning me, continuously while I was running away

I am still running in my nightmares!!

The famous movie, *"Shoah"* summed up perfectly the feeling of jealousy by saying, "Jews own homes



Ruth aged 4 with her father after she was stoned

(Kamienice) and we own the streets!" (Ulice).
 Jews have always worked hard, sometimes working at three jobs. We saved every cent and never drank our savings away.
 Yes insult! and threaten us! The louder you shout, the more obvious it is where it hurts you!!
 Keep eating your jealousy beans until you explode!
 Australians of Jewish faith are famous for their philanthropy!
 The Melbourne Theatre Company in the Arts Centre proudly carries the founder's name -The Smorgon Family.
 Cabrini Hospital proudly carries the Selwyn family name

and the new Gandel wing is named after the Gandel family who also created the Chadstone Shopping Centre. How many hundreds of people are employed by the Pratt Family and the Smorgon family?! My late 68-year-old son Nicky employed 200 HAPPY GRATEFUL people!
 HOW COULD YOU ALLOW THIS CRIMINAL BEHAVIOUR TOWARDS US JEWS HAPPEN?
 SHAME ON YOU! How ungrateful!
 AM ISRAEL CHAI! WE WILL PREVAIL!
 WE WILL OVERCOME AND SURVIVE. And triumph!
 Very sad and angry

Ruth Scheuer OAM

Garry Fabian OAM: *The 40 Year journey to reconnection with Germany*

This story traces a 40-year journey of many visits to Germany by a Child Survivor of the Holocaust. Reconnection has been a gradual process covering a range of events.

My family connection in Germany goes back to the year 1290 on my maternal side in Manheim and Heidelberg, and to the year 1600 on my paternal side in Kalise in East Prussia (now in Poland) traced through documents and family stories.

I was born in Stuttgart on the 11th January 1934 where my parents had settled after their marriage in 1932. When the Nazi Party assumed power in 1933, it increasingly became evident that there was no future there for Jews, despite their 700-hundred-year connection.

My family decided to leave and in 1936 moved to Sudetenland, the German enclave in Czechoslovakia and purchased a small business. But this was not a long-term solution, and when Germany annexed this area in 1938, we moved on to Prague. This proved to be a time of great insecurity, as we were stateless after Jews were deprived of their German citizenship in 1935, and at best were tolerated by the Czechs, with the threat of expulsion a daily possibility. When Nazi Germany invaded the rest of Czechoslovakia on 15th March 1939, our position became better and worse at the same time. We were now legal residents but came under the restrictions imposed on Jews.

In 1941 the Theresienstadt Ghetto (some 50 kms from Prague,) was set up, in order to make the country "Juden Rein". And were deported there in November 1942. Basically, the Ghetto was a transit camp, with weekly deportations to the extermination camps in the east. Over the four years between 1941 - 1945 some 140,000 passed through, including 15,000 children under the age of 14. At the end of the war, only 120 – 150 children survived. We were fortunate to survive in the ghetto until



Garry at the unveiling of the monument to Joseph Oppenheimer

liberation on 8th May 1945, when three Soviet tanks rolled in.

A decision had to be made, what next? Obviously returning to Germany, after the events over the last 12 years was totally out of the question; we returned to Podmockly where we had settled in 1936. But it was clear that there was no long-term future in Europe for us. We emigrated to Australia in 1947, setting up a future in a new land, new culture and as far away as possible from the traumatic recent past. I had to adapt to a new language and go to school, having had minimal formal schooling (two years since I was six) I progressed quite well, but after just over six years of schooling, higher education was not an option, and I took up an apprenticeship in the electrical trade.

I felt no connection with Germany which to me was a total abomination. Of course, I knew my family history, we spoke German at home, but that was the only link that I retained.

The first time I travelled back to Europe was 40 years later in 1987 and spent a few days in Germany, including Stuttgart, the city of my birth. Whenever I saw someone in the street in their 60s or 70s my first thought was "what did you do during the Nazi era?"



Garry at Government House on receiving his Order of Australia medal.

I spoke the language, I could communicate, read the street signs, read the newspaper, but my feelings were hostile. And I had no desire to stay for any length of time, or indeed come back.

The next visit was in 1993. For 10 years I ran the motoring section of the Australian Jewish News in Melbourne and had built an extensive connection in the industry as a motoring journalist and was regularly involved with new car releases and event. But only the "A" level journalists were invited for overseas events. After extensive suggestions to possibly obtain an overseas visit, I eventually put a visit together. The first trip was sponsored by Mercedes Benz and Porsche in Stuttgart. I spent a day at Mercedes who were most hospitable; took me on a tour of the factory, design studio, and lunch in the board room. Some days I chose not to speak German. To my hosts I was an Australian motoring journalist. As I was leaving, I thanked them for their hospitality - in German. I could see on their faces "What were we talking about he should not have heard!". I explained my story and some of the older ones looked quite uncomfortable. But one of the younger managers asked if I would be in town for a few days, and invited me to have dinner, with him and his circle of friends.

Up to this time I had not spoken about my experiences, but that evening I realised that it was important to talk about Holocaust experiences in order that they must be aired to the new generations and not allowed to be denied by revisionist historians. At this point I decided that I had satisfied my need to return, but there was no reason for any further visits to Germany.

The next visit was in 2001. A long leadup is associated with it. In the 1950's many German cities invited "their former Jewish citizen" to visit (I call it the German Guilt Trip). In the early 1980s I wrote to Stuttgart asking if they

had a similar scheme in place. I received a prompt reply saying they had made substantial donations to Israel and that was their bit. While the style of the letter was most polite, the underlying message was "get lost and don't bother us again".

About a year later a letter arrived informing that they had started this scheme and if I was interested, to return the enclosed registration form - which I did. Once again German punctuality came to the fore, thanking me with the following message. "You must realise that former citizens born around the turn of the century must have precedence... and it could be some time in the future before they could get back to me". Every couple of years I would ask again, with the same response about "those born at the turn the century". In 1999 I wrote another letter suggesting as the new century was just around the corner, this sounded a bit unrealistic. Once again, a reply by return mail arrived (that was before the internet) on current indication an invitation would be coming for a visit in 2001.

The invitation arrived towards the end of 2000. Stuttgart was more generous than most other German cities, offering two weeks stay; paying return air fares, accommodation and a range of free functions. 2001 was the 19th and last year of the program that sponsored over 500 invitees. Interestingly enough only 11 from Australia participated over the years. Perhaps this was because the distance was a barrier, but more likely reflected the restricted immigration policy prewar.

Most of the guests came from USA, South America, Israel and the UK only four from Australia. The hospitality was warm and welcoming with functions, outings and a formal final dinner, where I was invited to speak on behalf of the visitors.

"To our hosts: Over the last two weeks your invitation has not only given us the opportunity to discover or more accurately rediscover the many attractions this gracious city has to offer with its beautiful surrounding. In many cases filling in gaps of the memories we retained from our childhood, as we enjoyed the broad spectrum of rich cultural life, tasting wonderful food and appreciating the famous German Gemütlichkeit"

While this provided a very pleasant aspect of our visit to the city of our birth, more importantly we found your hand stretched out to us a genuine gesture in the spirit of reconciliation.

We must never forget the terrible events of the past, we who came here must join our hands with yours, and together continue to build a world where reason, tolerance and fairness will prevail and ensure that the forces of darkness that fell over this city and country in the 1930's will never be allowed to rise again "



German Order of Merit

Our visit has given us a glimpse of what might have been if history had taken a different path," I concluded, convinced that I did not need to return to Germany in the future. However, in 2003 a letter arrived from Stuttgart with another link. In 1996 a hostel for foreign students mainly from Africa, was burnt down and many injured, by right

wing forces with 8 killed and many injured. This caused a group of citizens to form a foundation to rebuild the hostel which is still functioning today. The foundation also actively combats prejudice, intolerance and racism. The Foundation together with a TV station planned a trip to Theresienstadt and invited me to participate in this if I was willing to come to Stuttgart.

I accepted and in June of 2003 travelled with Evelyn back to Germany. The three-day trip consisted of some 50 participants, including 20 young people, historians, a couple of musicians, and two Holocaust survivors. A film was made of the trip "A Simple Journey", which was shown on German TV, (available on the internet to this day).

After the 2001 visit the Lord Mayor of Stuttgart sent a report annually of what was happening in town. The 2005 issue included an item that the World Soccer Cup was to be in Germany. As a number of matches would take place in Stuttgart, with the Socceroo's team playing there. We discussed this at a family dinner; our grandchildren Ruth and Seamus who both played junior soccer – and still do – suggested we should attend.

Following many discussions over several weeks, a decision was made. In June 2006 Evelyn, myself, Carole, Kim Ruth, Seamus, headed to Germany. By that stage I felt quite comfortable going back to Stuttgart. Seamus and I sat in the stadium and watched our team beat Croatia to move into the next round. We were filmed and appeared on the TV news that evening. The next morning when I stepped out of our hotel, I was approached by an elderly man "I saw you on TV yesterday. You must realise that Germany today is different to the bad times of the past" he told me. This trip was also the start of my speaking to schools and community groups about my Holocaust experience, which became a part of my subsequent visits to Germany.

During this stage my reluctance to return to Germany was

no longer an issue, but there was a lack of opportunity over the next eight years. I did keep in close contact with the many friends over there who kept me up to date. In 2007, I applied and received German citizenship and a passport. This was not a move to establish formal links, but the main motive was that children and grandchildren were also eligible for German citizenship, and the benefit to them was that they could work in Europe without restrictions.

Come 2014 Carole and Kim were in Germany for a conference. Whilst there, they caught up with a long-term associate, who was a union organizer, now a university lecturer, researching slave labour camps during the war. Carole mentioned the German version of my book "A Look Back Over My Shoulder" and I posted a copy to him. His reply suggested that he wanted me to come to Germany to talk to schools and would organize a visit to Braunschweig and was working on obtaining funding for this. After several month wait the university in Braunschweig issued a formal invitation. I spent several days speaking to schools and community groups. Of course, Stuttgart was a natural stop. On this occasion I was awarded *The Stauffer Medallia* in Gold, the top award of the State of Württemberg (only one or two are awarded each year).

In 2017 another visit cropped up. On this occasion my daughter Carole and my grandson Seamus were my travel companions, both became and involved in talking to schools – a strong point for the second and third generation of a Holocaust survivor, thereby extending the message. This trip also included speaking in Berlin to a school for foreign students.

In 2021 a most surprising event occurred, I was presented with the award of the *Ver Dienst Kreutz - The Order of Merit* (the top award of the Federal Republic of Germany in recognition of my connection with the community. It was presented to me by the Honorary German Consul in Melbourne.

The next connection, which continued to extend my reconnection with Germany was in 2022. This year marked the 80-year anniversary when 1150 Jews from Stuttgart were deported to Theresienstadt. The city issued a formal invitation to me as a special guest. As only one of two survivors to be special guests at the commemorations, I was joined by my daughters, Carole and Vicki. Several events were linked to the event. The principal one was at the now disused railway station where the transports departed. Speeches by the Lord Mayor, Catholic and Lutheran archbishops and the head of the Islamic community spoke. I was interviewed by two journalists for TV and Radio. The connection with the land of my birth took another step forward on this

visit. The most recent link was added in 2024, when I was invited as a principal guest by the city of Stuttgart to the unveiling of a remembrance site for an injustice that occurred in 1738. The persecution and execution of Joseph Oppenheimer. Carole, Kim and Seamus travelled with me. Seamus was also honoured as a guest of the city.

The details of this visit were covered in a talk to Courage to Care in an article in last years "Under the Dome" magazine.

It has been a 40-year journey that has taken many steps to reconnect with Germany. There were decades of personal contact – but my family history stretches back long before I was born.

During the years of persecution and internment in Theresienstadt I felt no connection with Germany, and indeed my family's deep roots into the past for 700 years.

The very tentative reconnection following by my first return in 1987 slowly developed over time.

I have made many good friends over the years and, appreciate the official invitations to several Remembrance events, being involved and being given the opportunity to share my story with the next generation. Hopefully getting the young ones involved with the message "Never Again".

I feel comfortable in Germany now and I am often asked if I could return to live there. My answer is "No". While I am happy to visit, after almost eight decades in another country and society, having built a life and family in Australia, this would not be a realistic option.

I am also fully aware of the rising move to 'Right- wing' radicalism in Germany and across Europe in recent times and that is a grave concern.

Garry Fabian OAM

Dr Paul Valent OAM: *Book Launch Invitation*

Invitation to an interview with **Paul Valent OAM**

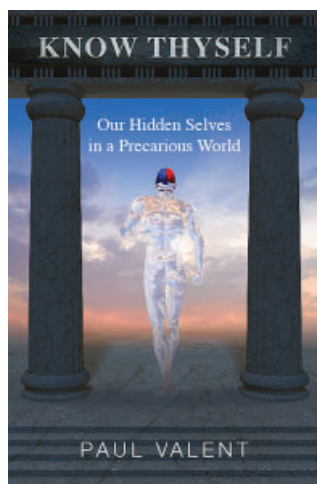
by his daughter **Dani Valent** at

Venue: the Avenue Bookstore, Elsternwick

Date: July 7th.

Launching Paul's latest book

"Know Thyself"



Bookings: <https://www.trybooking.com/events/landing/1603570>

Hungarian Translators needed

The Melbourne Holocaust Museum's Archives Department is currently cataloguing a Hungarian collection and is in need of Hungarian translators.

If you are interested in this project, Please contact Alice McInnes, Collections Specialist, by email: Alice.McInnes@mhm.org.au.

INVITATION

CSH COFFEE CLUB



Dear Child Survivors,

Please join us at the monthly *CSH Coffee Club* meetup.

Date: Wednesday, 1st July 2026

**Venue: Caulfield RSL
4 St Georges Road, Elsternwick**

Time: 10.30am – 12 noon

Tea and coffee served : Free of charge

We will be in the light refreshment area
to the left of the main doors.

Look for our banner

Calendar of Events

Book Launch:

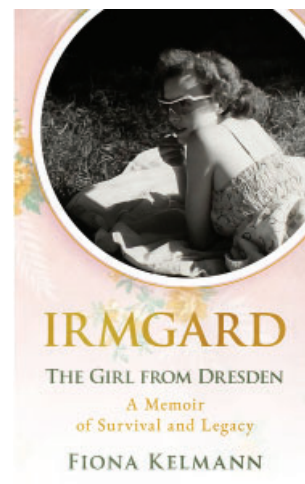
IRMGARD The Girl from Dresden

honouring the late **Irma Hanner OAM**'s legacy.

Date/Time: 19 Jul 2026 2:00 pm

Cost: \$20 General Admission/
\$10 Concession/MHM volunteer

Enquire: bookings@mhms.org.au | 03 9528 1985



Book Launch:

Miriam's Light

Join us as we celebrate **Jonathan Kanat's** debut book *Miriam's Light*, drawing on family testimony to tell the story of his mother, **Miriam Kanat, a child Holocaust survivor.**

Date/Time: 26 Jul 2026 2:00 pm

Cost: \$20 General Admission/
\$10 Concession/MHM volunteer

Enquire: bookings@mhms.org.au | 03 9528 1985

