

The Hidden Child

PUBLISHED BY HIDDEN CHILD FOUNDATION®/ADL

VOL. XXVIII 2020

RECONCILIATION



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Dear Readers:

I'm often asked, "How do you come up with the theme for each issue?" The answer is simple: the idea often emerges spontaneously from the submitted articles. Recently, I became acquainted with the German organization Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP), and was introduced to **Marlene Wulf**, a young volunteer and the ideal representative for her country and generation. Nearly simultaneously, but quite separately, clinical psychologist and Hidden Child **Flora Hogman** sent me an article she had written years ago on German-Jewish reconciliation, yet had somehow filed away — to be resurrected at this time. Though the concept of reconciliation between Jews and Germans has been around for some time, it took until now for all the stars to be aligned for *The Hidden Child*. Complementing Marlene's and Flora's articles, we have a very personal essay from our own volunteer, **Cordula Hahn**, who writes about how she, a Child Survivor, 'overcame the shock of a German son-in-law.'

As always, our main focus remains on our members' stories, the *raison d'être* of this publication. Over the past few months, **Joseph Gosler** and **Michel Jeruchim** published remarkable books, and we are pleased to present selected passages that we know will resonate with our readers. Also of great interest to our members will be the articles by two medical doctors, **Blanche Krakowski**, who revisits her childhood memories and probes her individual faith, and **Sophie Turner Zaretsky**, who is impelled to fulfill her obligations to her children and posterity by speaking and writing about the Holocaust and the heroism of both the rescuers and the Jews. **Esia Baran Friedman**, who recalls finding her best friend Chaya Szczeranski after the war, has been trying to locate her ever since. (Please contact our office if you know anything about the fate of Chaya Szczeranski, born in Vilnius.) **Cora Schwartz**, another volunteer at the Hidden Child Foundation, penned a poignant poem about revisiting her late husband's home in Ukraine. **Samuel Lauber** sums up the story of his life and career, and recounts how he found the family that hid him in La Louvière, Belgium; and **Simon Jeruchim**, Michel's older brother, writes about art as sustenance during adversity and as inspiration throughout his lifetime.

This year, as Covid-19 erupts everywhere, we've turned to two of our most distinguished members, **Dr. Robert Krell** and **Rabbi Joseph Polak**, asking them to comment on the isolation Hidden Children are facing, once more — this time in our old age. We are grateful to Dr. Krell and Rabbi Polak for their most valuable contribution to this issue. We know our readers will appreciate their eloquent messages and reminder that "this time we are not alone."

Rachelle Goldstein, Editor

HIDDEN CHILD FOUNDATION/ADL

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Vol. XXVIII

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Dr. Flora Hogman

HATRED AND RECONCILIATION THE GERMAN AND THE JEWISH JOURNEYS FOLLOWING THE HOLOCAUST

By Flora Hogman, PhD

Reconciliation certainly implies a present, active recognition of, and a listening to, one another. Here is one personal anecdote to illustrate some of the many issues involved. Some years ago, I spoke to a high school class about my experiences as a Jewish child in France during WWII. My talk had been prearranged by Facing History and Ourselves, an American organization that uses lessons of history to challenge teachers and their students to stand up to bigotry and hate.

One of the students asked if I hated the Germans. As I was about to answer 'yes,' I looked at the young German student I had invited to this event. He was in the U.S. on a one-year internship, working towards reconciliation between Germans and Jews through the organization ARSP (Action Reconciliation Service for Peace). We had spoken at length before, and I knew him to be a very nice young man. He'd come to the school on his motorcycle. I certainly did not hate him!

Suddenly, I realized how I had remained stuck in an era. Hate knows no time, no change — it just maintains stereotypes. Then, I thought the young German and I should address this issue together in front of the next class, and I invited him to join me there. I told my story, and then he spoke about Germany today. I don't know how he felt about it, but I certainly felt good that both our struggles were acknowledged.

Throughout my life, there have always been times when old feelings about the war resurfaced. Once, out of the blue, a German friend's husband apologized to me for having been in the Hitler Youth, and we both cried. Still, we never discussed the war, or why we cried, and the whole matter remained an isolated incident.

For many years after the war, I ignored such crucial events, both personal and

general, until the 1970s when, very reluctantly, I had to concede the war's impact on my life. Then, I steeped myself in studying the period — reading, writing, researching, looking for family — trying at last to come to terms with the subject I had long avoided. In 2001, while structuring the course 'The Holocaust, an evolving Memory,' at the New School, I reached an epiphany: I came to the realization that Germans too have struggled and still are struggling with the integration of their war experience into their history.

Perhaps I had become more capable of looking at, and learning about, the 'enemy' because I had been recognized as a survivor and no longer felt compelled to push my story away as if it were a foreign body. That was a big relief! The 'enemy' was now a human being. Was this reconciliation? In allowing myself to know, could I go beyond hate, beyond fear, and then maybe to trust?

In the early years after the war, as survivors rebuilt their lives, most wanted to forget their trauma. More than anything, we child survivors wanted to blend in. Besides, no one wanted to hear horror stories. In Germany, as well, there was silence, within families and in the history books. An insidious sense of numbness prevailed, and much healing was needed everywhere.

A few forces arose that toppled the post-war silence in what became known as the struggle for/against memory. On the Jewish side, there was Simon Wiesenthal, who began hunting Nazis when some neo-Nazi Germans dared him to prove Ann Frank had been deported by the SS. (He did prove it.)

On the German side, in the 1960s, there were two German psychoanalysts, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich, who wrote the book, *The Inability to*

Continued on next page

Mourn. The authors described the Germans' idealization of Hitler as the omnipotent, invincible, collective 'father-hero,' and their inability to grieve for their profound loss of self-esteem, identity, and their deep sense of shame. Amazingly, though the text is dense, 100,000 copies of the book were sold in Germany. This book had touched a nerve; there was a need to understand.

Of course, there was the Eichmann trial in Israel. And then, second-generation Germans began to ask questions in reaction to their parents' silence. When unanswered, the question 'What did you do during the war, Daddy,' left these youngsters with the burden of their parents' war.

Children of survivors also began to ask questions about a war their parents had seldom discussed. Speaking about the war brought out painful memories, and survivors also feared such stories could shatter their children's trust in people. But at some point, one has to connect to one's past, and silence becomes unbearable. The second-generation movement of the 1970s, asserted its existence as a group — children of survivors — whose identity and struggles bore the legacy of the war, and they got their parents to talk.

In the late 1970s, as Germany tried again to forget the war, the NBC telefilm 'Holocaust' was shown in Germany. Fifteen million Germans watched it. Then, in 1985, there was the Bitburg Incident, where President Reagan and Chancellor Kohl of Germany agreed to forgive, forget, and reconcile. President Reagan presided over a wreath-laying ceremony at the base of a memorial looming over the graves of nearly 2,000 German soldiers, including 49 Waffen SS troops, who were said to have participated in the massacre at Oradour-sur-Glane, a small village of 330 inhabitants in France that had sheltered an equal number of refugees, including a few Jewish children. Many reacted with indignation. One cannot force forgiveness, or forgetting.

Survivors needed to be heard. Too many had been quiet for too long. The outcry by Jews and Christians led to Germany's President Richard von Weizacker's notable address to the parliament, on May 8, 1985, about responsibility and memory. As the first president of a reunified Germany, he used his platform to urge Germans to face and accept responsibility for the crimes of the Nazi regime. The crisis

had forced a different level of awareness, of language, of communication. Weizacker's message was: there is no collective redemption, only individual responsibility, an interesting concept in a country that had been an authoritarian state. And, he added, there is no reconciliation without remembering.

Some still wanted to exculpate Nazi Germany. In one extreme example, the German philosopher-historian Ernst Nolte said at one point that Chaim Weizman,

pushed themselves to relate their experiences, partly to connect their children and grandchildren's needs to their pasts, but then also out of a need to be heard — to bear witness. Rabbi Elliot Dorff addresses how the Jewish faith deals with all the elements of forgiveness, including issues of justice, vengeance, repentance, duty, reparation, and reconciliation. Asking 'shall we forgive, do we have the right to forgive?' he talks about secondary reconciliation between the two sets of

MUTUAL DIALOGUES ARE CERTAINLY AN ESSENTIAL PART OF THE RECONCILIATION EFFORT. SUCH INTERCHANGES CAN EVENTUALLY PROMOTE FURTHER DISCUSSIONS AND HEALING ACTIONS, AND GIVE RISE TO VARIOUS JEWISH/GERMAN ENCOUNTERS.

a leading Zionist at the time, was partly responsible for the war because he had 'declared war' on Germany in September 1939, and Hitler was afraid of him. On the other hand, there is Anya Rosmus, who singlehandedly took on her hometown to find, and then tell, the truth about the townsmen's wartime activities. She dispelled the widespread myths of their honorable behavior during the Holocaust and as a result became the subject of hatred in her town. This predicament was portrayed in the film 'The Nasty Girl.'

Still, with various degrees of success, much has been done in Germany in educating about the war. Some efforts prompted acknowledgment and reconciliation, publicly and personally: there were visits of Germans to Israel, and of Israelis to Germany, and invitations to German Jews to return to their old German towns for commemorative visits. Yet, many Germans are just plain tired of the topic and simply want to forget it.

Conversely, for survivors, reconciliation implies forgiveness, and thereby raises the fear that what happened to them and to their families will be made right by the act of forgiving, and hence, be forgotten. For survivors, forgetting is a violation of the memory of their murdered kin, which is all they have left. At first, survivors

second-generation, linking reconciliation to admitting wrongs, and then being forgiven.

Mutual dialogues are certainly an essential part of the reconciliation effort. Such interchanges can eventually promote further discussions and healing actions, and give rise to various Jewish/German encounters. One such meeting, initiated by Israeli psychologist Dan Bar On, connected children of survivors with children of Nazis. They met in Germany and in Israel.

Dan Bar On's immediate family had fled from Germany to Palestine in 1933. The rest of his family was murdered in Germany. In the 1980s he decided to interview children of Nazis in Germany, and this evolved into joint meetings between them and the children of survivors. In the preface of his book, *Legacy of Silence: Encounters with children of the 3rd Reich*, Dan Bar On answers why he united the two groups: "It was the quest for hope."

I think I understand. We need to go beyond hate: hate destroys everyone. As Bar On stated, the group's purpose was 'working mutually through the betrayed trust.' With all the bumps in the road, it became a profound, powerful, and lasting experience. It turned out the two groups had much in common: silent parents, the burden of finding meaning in, or making

Continued on next page

sense of, a horrible past.

Ultimately, listening means respecting everyone's struggles; perhaps, creating a mirror for one another — a 'holding environment,' as psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott would say, so each can feel whole again, and not alone in the process of (for instance) facing the truth about Nazi parents, and integrating painful feelings and experiences. Interestingly, and independently, at the time of Bar On's visit to Germany, articles by and about children of Nazis were beginning to be published. The time seemed ripe, finally, to deal with the truth and the shame.

Over the years, more Germans and Jews convened in Germany and elsewhere. New York psychoanalyst Isaac Zieman (1920 – 2007), a survivor of both the Holocaust and Stalin's gulag, devoted his life to resolving long-standing hatred between people. Each year, starting in 1973, he lectured various groups in Germany and other countries about the roots of racism, and he conducted theme-centered group interactions. After one such workshop, held in New York City in 1992 at the Anti-Defamation League, Zieman said, "It is exhilarating to see people from different ethnic groups getting to know each other and finding common humanity in one another ... I consider it my responsibility, as the sole survivor of my family, to work on improving relations between different groups of people." One

compassion to one another's stories of pain, guilt, anguish, loss and fear. As the stories resonate within us, the burdens are lightened and we begin to transform the impact of our legacies, offering hope to future generations."

As Germany was forced to 'remember,' its people needed to recapture a coherent identity and a sense of integrity as a nation. Many efforts were made to place the Holocaust in a historical perspective, to make it a 'chapter' in German history, and to deal with the issue of shame. Feelings of unending shame/guilt may prevent some from feeling redeemable, reinforce for others the need for total denial, and at the extreme, project blame onto the victim. Rather than focusing on shame and guilt, the emphasis needed to be placed on responsibility. Responding to the contentiousness surrounding a Memorial to the Jews in Berlin, Wolfgang Thierse, the Speaker of Parliament stated, "We are building it for ourselves. It will help us confront a chapter of our history."

But there is also the strong ongoing need for Germans to find their war heroes. For example: a soldier who had been shot for helping Jews in the Vilnius ghetto, was honored for his courage in defying orders. His name replaced that of a Wehrmacht general on a military base's monument in Germany. There is now an acceptance that the war happened, that there were choices,

for self-esteem in general. If we are all to go beyond hatred, fear, or self-hatred, it is essential that each side acknowledge the other.

I must admit, as I write this, I, a Holocaust survivor, have a little voice inside, saying 'but don't forget all the horrible things that happened.' The fear is there. The best I can do is to acknowledge it.

Hate does not face the past — it keeps you mired in it. Reconciliation does not mean to forget. Whatever its meaning, reconciliation starts with remembering, acknowledging what happened, and ultimately sharing and respecting one another's feelings and struggles — be it a sense of shame, or despair about losses and victimization. Thus, a gap of trust may be bridged, ultimately helping to mourn what happened.

What more can one do? Reconciliation involves individuals, social forces — individuals in governments and governments themselves. Such efforts eventually lead to oppose (and hopefully diffuse) hatred and prejudice, and to the restoration of human bonds. Where does forgiving stand? Maybe it lies in the recreated human connection and in the trust constituting the process of forgiving. ■

Flora Hogman is a clinical psychologist with a private practice in Manhattan. She has done extensive research on trauma and identity relating to aspects of survival from the Holocaust, especially concerning children during and after the war, the effects of conversion to Christianity on adult identity, and resolution of trauma. This article has been excerpted from a paper she presented a few years ago in New York at the United Nations' NGO Committee of Mental Health.

• Dr. Hogman's publications include:

Hogman, F., 1995 *Memory of the Holocaust, An organizing vehicle for Identity, in Echoes of the Holocaust, Jerusalem, Israel.*

• Hogman, F., 1988 *The Experience of Catholicism for Jewish Children During WWII, Psychoanalytic Review, 75 (4).*

• Hogman, Flora, 1985, *Role of Memories in Lives of WW II orphans, American Academy of Child Psychiatry.*

• Hogman, F., 1983, *Coping Mechanisms of Jewish Children During WWII and its aftermath, Journal of Humanistic Psychology.*

• Hogman, F., 1998, *Trauma and Identity through two generations of the Holocaust, in Psychoanalytic Review, V. 85, no. 4.*

HATE DOES NOT FACE THE PAST — IT KEEPS YOU MIRED IN IT. RECONCILIATION DOES NOT MEAN TO FORGET... RECONCILIATION STARTS WITH REMEMBERING, ACKNOWLEDGING WHAT HAPPENED, AND ULTIMATELY SHARING AND RESPECTING ONE ANOTHER'S FEELINGS AND STRUGGLES...

of the participants commented, "It would be a tragic loss if all of us came away with these new feelings and didn't share them with other people in whatever sphere of influence we have."

The group One-by-One, focuses on 'transformation.' On their website (one-by-one.org), they state: "We seek out the humanity in each other as we listen with

and that some, if few, did make life-endangering 'moral' choices.

I believe it is important for Jews to accept and sustain the Germans' needs for this recognition of the 'good' in Germans, rather than the 'good' Germans (which implies its opposite, the 'bad' Germans, dichotomies which can only further the hate), and to support the Germans' quest

GERMAN-JEWISH RECONCILIATION 'WHO WOULD HAVE THOUGHT 75 YEARS AGO THAT SOMETHING LIKE THIS WAS POSSIBLE?'

By Marlene Wulf

It is 6:00 am. For eleven hours I have been sitting with many others in a synagogue on the Upper West Side of New York, reading innumerable names of unknown people who died in the Holocaust. Yet, we are only up to the letter B: B, as in Birnbaum. For eleven hours, we've read out the names of Jews from France who were deported during the NS occupation. I am devastated and speechless. My mouth is dry. I feel tired, but at the same time, shocked and troubled. Never have I come closer to understanding the suffering of millions of Jews. Never have I felt more the burden of guilt that has been placed on my people. Never have I been more determined to stand up against hatred, racism, and antisemitism. Never have I felt the need to be courageous and compassionate this strongly. It is the morning of the 11th of April, 2018. It is Yom Ha'Shoah, the day of remembrance of the Shoah.

I was born and raised in Germany. I am 20 years old. Thus, I was born 60 years after World War II started. Nevertheless, German-Jewish history is tragically connected through the Holocaust. In the year 2017/18, I volunteered for service with the organization Action Reconciliation Service for Peace (ARSP) in New York City. For one year, I worked with and learned from people who survived the Holocaust. For one year, I had amazing experiences and met so many extraordinary people. For one year, I learned about and experienced Jewish culture. But most importantly, for one year, I felt the timeliness of history by seeing how the past affects people — including ourselves — in our daily lives. German and Jewish history is intertwined, not just since the Shoah, but for more than a thousand years.

I do not know when I first heard about the Shoah: Holocaust education is an

integral part of the German educational system. Again, and again, we were taught about the killing apparatus of the Nazis and its consequences for millions of people. However, two years ago, my knowledge about the Holocaust was limited to this rather theoretical knowledge. I had never spoken with a Holocaust survivor, and the people I had met who identified as Jewish could be counted on one hand. I had a lot of basic knowledge about the Holocaust, but I did not have a real understanding of its actual meaning. Now, two years later, I think that the comprehension of these horrors is a process. I am not sure that any human being who has not experienced the Shoah himself can ever grasp it in its entirety. For me, the process began when I finished high school and went to the USA to do my voluntary service with ARSP.

ARSP is a German organization that was founded in 1958 during the synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany. The first sentences of the appeal read as follows:

"We Germans started the Second World War and for this reason alone, more than others, became guilty of causing immeasurable suffering to humankind. Germans have in sinful revolt against the will of God exterminated millions of Jews. Those of us who survived and did not want this to happen did not do enough to prevent it."

With this principle in mind, the newly founded organization aimed to work for peace and reconciliation in countries that had been affected by the Holocaust. During the years that followed, ARSP widened its scope and built collaborations in more countries, and with diverse partners. Today, 60 years after its foundation, ARSP is still committed to this policy.

Every year, 180 young Germans are sent to thirteen countries, including Israel, the Netherlands, the US, and Poland, to build

Continued on next page

bridges and to reconcile with former enemies and victims. In these countries, the students work as volunteers on different projects at various venues: such as, at museums, with political organizations, or in the Jewish community.

During my year of service, I was one of the volunteers for the Holocaust survivor program of the home care agency Selfhelp Community Services, Inc. (Selfhelp) in New York City. There, I served as a “friendly visitor” for Holocaust survivors. This meant I had thirteen clients (although I prefer to refer to them as my friends, or even my second grandparents) whom I visited every week. Together, we played games, sang songs, took little trips ... the activities were as diverse as the people I visited.

In Germany, it is very common to do a gap year after graduating from high school to get practical experience before starting college. However, ARSP focuses on the creation of continuance and sustainability by placing German volunteers in projects that deal with the history of Germany. Since I was interested in history and was eager to take an active part in reconciliation in the name of the German people, I decided to apply for voluntary service with ARSP.

In Germany, ARSP is called Action Sign of Atonement Service for Peace. This meaning is very different from its English counterpart, and in the beginning, I had some difficulties accepting and adapting to this name. How can I atone for something that happened sixty years before I was born? Do I need to feel guilty for a crime I did not commit? Am I automatically a Nazi because I was born in Germany? These were questions that accompanied me during the time of my voluntary service and beyond. I had several discussions about them with my co-volunteers, my family and the survivors. In that way, ARSP challenged me, from the beginning, to question my surroundings as well as my identity and values.

I was very nervous before starting my voluntary service. It was the first time that I was going abroad to live alone, very far from home, for a long period. Furthermore, I was anxious about how Holocaust survivors would react towards me, a German. I expected that they would be repelled by me, as I might remind them of their horrible experiences.

However, the opposite was true: I was

welcomed with open arms and the survivors were eager to learn about current life in Germany. Many of them still spoke German and often asked me to sing German folk songs with them. In that way, I was introduced to a namesake, Marlene Dietrich, and I am now able to sing most of her songs by heart. While it made me happy to see the survivors recalling their happy youth in Germany, it also made me sad and thoughtful. Why had people who felt entirely German, whose parents and

the people I visited. There are countless moments I remember and value. Writing about all of them would be out of the scope of this article, but I can describe a few situations that stick out more than others:

There is Ms. D. for example. I do not know much about how Ms. D. survived the war. Only occasionally, did she share little pieces of her story with me. Most of the time, she did not want to talk about her experiences. Ms. D. was the



Learning from the past and forming new friendships: Marlene Wulf and a Holocaust survivor at a SelfHelp gathering in New York.

grandparents had lived in Germany all their lives, been treated with such hatred?

I still do not understand how anyone is capable of such horrors. Working at Selfhelp showed me what blind hatred can do to an individual, but also to a society as a whole. I hope that in the future people will focus on their similarities rather than on their differences.

During my voluntary service, I met many people, heard many stories, and learned that there is no such person as a “typical survivor.” Everyone had a different experience, and dealt with obstacles and losses in individual ways. As I was challenged each week to learn new things, my work became very interesting.

Their courage and energy inspired me, and I was amazed by how people who had lost everything in the Shoah found the strength to build a completely new life in the USA. Luckily, I was able to develop very close relationships with

only client that confronted me with my heritage as a German by saying that “you were all Nazis during that time,” and by asking me about my grandparents and my great-grandparents. She laughed about the German name of ARSP. She had lost her entire family in the Holocaust, and for her, I could not atone for the crimes committed by my people.

Instead, she preferred the idea of reconciliation. Although it might be hard for others to imagine, Ms. D. and I built up a very close relationship. When she introduced me to others, she always told them that I was her student, learning about the Holocaust and Judaism. I think this is a good description of what I did in New York as I visited so many different, yet always welcoming, people. Already during my first week, I was invited to celebrate Rosh Hashana with a Jewish family, and during the year, I visited countless

Continued on next page

synagogues and became acquainted with various affiliations of Judaism.

Another precious moment was my encounter with Mr. J. He was not one of my regular clients, and I only met him in July 2018. I think he is one of the kindest human beings I know. Born in Poland, in August 1939, he has only limited memories of the time of the occupation. Through a miracle, as he said, he was able to survive the war, together with his mother. After the war, his family fled to South America. He learned Spanish, went to university and even got a scholarship along with his wife so that they both could go to New York. In the States, he worked as an artist. His whole apartment is filled with his artwork and while I was visiting, he and his wife told me a story about each one of his paintings. It was most interesting to hear the stories, which often dealt with his memories of the Holocaust.

At the end of my visit, he gave me a present, a painting of a window. That window was in the barrack of the camp where he and his mother were imprisoned. It is one of his earliest remembrances from his childhood. The painting is small and dark, and I can only surmise how he felt while looking out that window. There is no perspective beyond it. At first, I did not know how to react, and I was unsure if I could even accept this gift. His wife, however, told me then with tears in her eyes how much the gift meant to them. Giving me the painting of the Holocaust symbolized some kind of reconciliation to them. I realized that this was a very special moment in the life of Mr. J. who had lost his father, among others, in the Holocaust.

The three of us were hugging and comforting one another as we cried together. Even though I had not met Mr. J. before, we had become close in this one short visit, and I am very thankful that I was able to help him to reconcile a bit with Germany. If I were to summarize the impact my voluntary service had on me as well as on the people I visited, this moment would embody it.

My voluntary service cannot undo what happened in the past. However, it may have brought a new perspective for the future — for me, and for the survivors. What I learned that year is that I am now a witness myself, and I have to talk about what I've heard. Of course, these are not



Another tender moment: Marlene Wulf with a survivor.

my personal stories. But by living in this world, stories about hatred become the narratives of us all. Together, we have to make sure to ban antisemitism, racism, and homophobia from our thinking. Only in this way, can we ensure to live in a free and peaceful world.

My voluntary service has also brought me closer to my faith. Having had the opportunity to learn about a different religion and traditions, I realize that we are more united than divided, and that we should focus on our similarities rather than on our differences. To promote this idea, I organized an interfaith prayer, together with one of my co-volunteers, between the Jewish Community Center of Manhattan and Miriam Gross, the pastor of St. Paul's Church, the German Evangelical Lutheran Church of New York. Even though it was only a small event, it meant a lot to me, and I hope that I was able to contribute to the understanding of different cultures.

I think that interfaith dialogue is a great opportunity to learn from one another and to reduce prejudices. Therefore, I am attending seminars on this topic and am engaged in a refugee project in my home town.

I am now in my second year at university. After returning to Europe in August 2018, I decided to continue my education in an international environment,

and am now taking European Studies in Maastricht, the Netherlands. Though my voluntary service and my studies have strengthened my interest in history and especially in commemorative culture and its impacts, I am still unsure about what to do in my professional life. I only know who I want to be as a person: I want to be courageous, someone who speaks up against hatred, injustice, and inequality, and who fights for a more just world. I sometimes struggle in these tasks, but the strength and courage of the survivors have inspired me, and continue to motivate me each day.

Nowadays, my best friend is an Israeli. I visited her family in Israel and my "second-grandparents" are Holocaust survivors. Who would have thought 75 years ago that something like this was possible? During my year with ARSP I learned new reasons to be happy and thankful: happy that I had the opportunity to work on such a principled project, and thankful to have met impressive people who taught me about survival, compassion, and about truly caring for others.

I know now that, even though I cannot atone for the past, reconciliation is possible. Together, we can stand up against hatred, and aim to work for a better world. ■

* Retrieved from: <https://www.actionreconciliation.org/about-us/history/germany/>; 15.09.2019



Portrait of Blanche Krakowski, before she went into hiding. Paris, 1942.

CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, COURTESY OF DR. BLANCHE KRAKOWSKI.

REVISITING MY 'MUSEUM' AND MY FAITH

By Blanche Krakowski

Blanche Krakowski delivered the following speech to her fellow congregants at the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue in commemoration of Yom Hashoah 2002.

I was born in August 1936 in Paris, France. I was three years old when the war began in 1939, and nearly four when Paris fell to the Germans in 1940. I do not remember much of family life prior to the war, but I have some recollections of the occupation period and the years immediately after the war.

These memories appear mostly as images, unrelated to one another, like walking from picture to picture in a museum. I am very familiar with my museum because we were lucky to hold on to the apartment where we lived on and off during the war, and permanently thereafter, until we moved to the States in 1953.

One of its rooms was the atelier or workroom, where my parents spent ninety percent of their time. They subcontracted from a manufacturer of raincoats, taking home bolts of fabric and rolls of paper patterns. I see my father standing in front of a high table, cutting many layers of cloth at one time, and my mother sitting at a sewing machine. When the garments were finished, they were packed way high onto a two-wheel cart, with me sitting atop.

My father would slip his arms into harnesses that were attached to the cart, and to my delight, he would pull me and the finished goods, like a horse, to the manufacturer's shop. The ride and the shop were fun. The owner always treated me with goodies. I remember a closely-knit group of people taking pleasure in meeting one another.

Another image is that of always waking up with my parents already in the workroom. My mother would leave her sewing machine and we would go to the kitchen where she would give me breakfast.

I also see my father and me racing to the kitchen to see who would get there first when my mother called to announce dinner was ready. I always won. I see where he sat and where my mother and I sat. I always raced to his spot but would invari-

ably get evicted to take my own seat. And always, after each meal, my parents would return to the workroom. At night, I went to bed with them still working.

The workroom was also my playroom and classroom. I played under the table, between their legs, dressing my doll with the scraps of material that fell down; and I learned how to use the sewing machine. At the end of the war, at nine years of age, I could sew and keep the machine in working condition.

Another picture in my museum is of my father taking me to the guignol (puppet show) in the park on Sunday mornings, while my mother cleaned the house. Adults could not enter the theater, so he would wait outside to retrieve me at the end of the performance.

Once he bought me a balloon that he attached to my wrist. I had a hoop that one rolled with a stick, and I wanted the balloon attached to the hoop. My father did not do such a good job because within a few minutes the balloon got loose and flew away. The most vivid picture of all is of my father running after the balloon, trying to catch it.

And then, I no longer had a father. I do not remember the transition between the day before when I had one and the next day when I did not. I do not remember asking. I do not remember answers. There had to have been.

With my parents working at home and me of preschool age, the three of us were constantly together. I do not remember my mother crying. I had to have felt an absence, a void, something. Children feel. Children sense when adults try to hide something from their children.

But I do not remember anything. I feel terribly guilty at the thought that I could not have missed him, that I dispensed of him so easily. I remember taking the train to the transit camp outside of Paris where

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he was. We visited him once. He was there 13 months prior to his deportation to Auschwitz. I was five years old and while in the camp he had built me a wooden bed for my doll and a picture frame. I imagine the guards allowed the prisoners something to do.

We received some letters from him with the word “censured” stamped on them. I am in possession of only one, his last one, where he scolds my mother for sending him more food than he could eat instead of giving it to the ‘little one.’ I appeared very thin to him in a photo she must have sent him. That letter also states they were leaving the camp the next day and to hold off any mailing until she heard from him again.

My father was deported to Auschwitz, Poland, on June 27th, 1942. Forty-six days later he was dead. He was 35 years old. I



Life before the Holocaust. Blanche with her doll, Paris, 1938.

CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, COURTESY OF DR. BLANCHE KRAKOWSKI.

was 6 years old. After the war, government and private agencies researched and collected documents. Whatever I know from that period is from those documents.

When conditions seemed perilous for us too, my mother became determined to save me. I was taken to a farm, somewhere in France, I never knew where. I liked it. I followed the farmer’s children, taking the cows to the meadow. I learned to milk the cows and to gather the wheat that fell off

the harvesting machine. I saw artificial insemination of cows and the birthing of calves. I went to school with the farmer’s kids and to church with the family. At night, I recited my prayers before going to bed.

But none of it made sense to me. I did not know where my mother was. She had come once, very early on, I guess to check that I was not in any danger. I was okay, and I no longer saw her.

I do not remember how I was reunited with my mother, or when. She told me the war had ended, we were going home, and we would never be separated again. My concept of war was rather vague. I went back to my own school in Paris where the director asked my mother what plans she had for her daughter. She did not hesitate, “She will be a doctor,” she answered. The director replied, “Be reasonable, you are Jewish, she will never be admitted to any medical school.” My mother contradicted emphatically, “She will.”

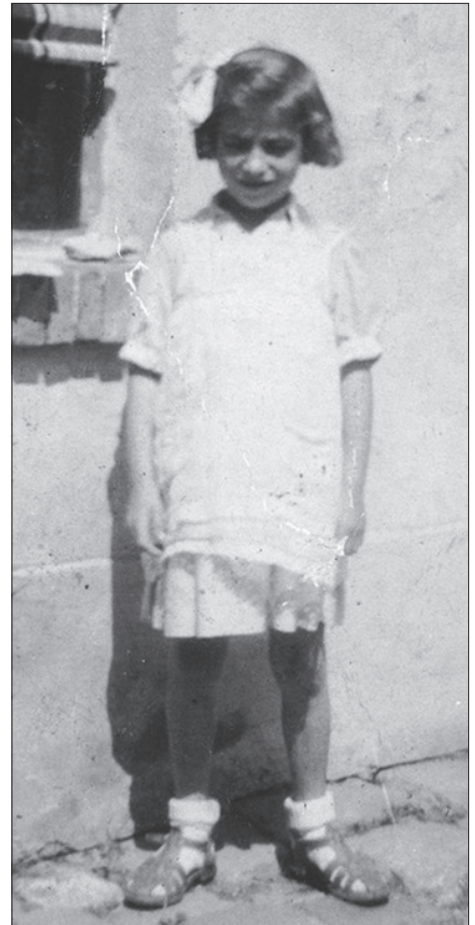
I do not remember asking about my father. My mother never told me anything, and I became somewhat afraid to ask. To this day I do not know the circumstances of my father’s arrest. My mother died in 1988 at 83 years of age. I never asked her, she never told me, and the subject was never discussed.

When the war ended for France, I did ask why she was crying when everybody was dancing in the streets, and all the church bells were ringing all day long. I do not remember the answer. If there was one, it must have been a generic nothing, thus setting the stage for this conspiracy of silence that seems prevalent among Jews affected by the Holocaust.

I knew nothing about Judaism. Religion was not part of our lives: survival was. Oh, I knew I was Jewish, you could not avoid not knowing, and we spoke Yiddish at home. So why am I a member of a synagogue, a former member of the Board? Faith? No, I have little of it. Spirituality? Definitely. I marvel at everything.

A single woman enters the delivery room of a hospital and two people come out of this same room. A strange flower encountered on a hike; I bend down to look at it. I saw the Grand Canyon, traveled to Antarctica, and each time I wondered how this overwhelming magnificence came into being. I majored in chemistry and physics in college.

I could explain it all — well sort of. Something else is missing. Something,



Blanche stands outside the farm house where she is hiding, France, 1942-1944.

CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, COURTESY OF DR. BLANCHE KRAKOWSKI.

somebody, must have put all this together.

Intellectual curiosity led me initially. I needed to know what I was all about. I read everything I could about the history of our people, how we started. Where did we come from? I read the Bible straight through as if it were a regular book. No easy task. The little I picked up along the way got me to other questions. I took a leave of absence from work as a physician and spent one year in Israel working in a hospital.

I attended Ulpan classes five nights a week for a year and learned Hebrew. Unfortunately, with my French, Yiddish, Spanish and English as available alternatives, Hebrew was not used as much as I should have. The notes in the hospital charts were written in English, or Hebrew, or French. That part was fun. You did not understand your predecessor’s notes.

I was hospitalized for a slipped cervi-

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Elementary school class that Blanche (front row center) attended after returning from hiding. Paris, 1945-1948.
CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, COURTESY OF DR. BLANCHE KRAKOWSKI.

cal disc resulting in a temporary paralysis of one arm. In traction for more than three months, depression became very intense. A little blurb in the Jewish Week newspaper told about a choir forming at a nearby synagogue. I needed to do something. I did sing in a choir in college, so I joined the Brooklyn Heights Synagogue choir.

I did not have to be a member, two others were not, but after two years I felt I needed to join and attend services, again for intellectual curiosity. I wanted to know about the prayers, how they are laid out, their structures and their meanings. It occurred to me that others have said those same prayers over the centuries. I began to think about those ancient people and felt an obligation to them not to break the chain.

Historically, we went through so much. Brooklyn Heights Synagogue started Bat Mitzvah classes. I signed up, again for intellectual curiosity, wanting to know what a 13-year-old child goes through. I struggled with the tropes of my Torah passage. A friend told me I could read it without the tropes. If I was going to be reading the Torah, I would do it right, otherwise why do it at all? So, I was a Bat-Mitzvah at the age of 55.

When I first came to the synagogue, I was struck by the lack of respect for the sanctuary: kids running around, bicycles

left in the back. For someone who never attended synagogues formally, a sanctuary nevertheless demanded my sense of awe in spite of my ignorance. I could not help but compare this with the respectful silence I had encountered in Catholic churches.

Our sanctuary is more formal now and I like it much better. Now what? I learned a great deal in 15 years. Faith is still as elusive as ever, except at funerals where doubts get a hold of me. The body is interred, but what about the person's life, feelings, fears, joys, hopes and pains? I cannot accept that those are also gone. Do I believe in the soul? I do not know. Intellectually, no. Emotionally, I must say maybe, or even yes. I cannot tolerate the end of a person's life that simply. Wondering if that person ever existed is an intolerable thought. When all is said and done, what is faith anyhow? ■

Blanche Krakowski, MD, MBA, is a retired pediatrician, living in Brooklyn, NY. She is the daughter of Israel (Jacques) Krakowski and Frajda, née Fajerman, who were originally from Lodz, Poland, and had immigrated separately to France. In May, 1941, Jacques and his brother, Albert, were rounded up and sent to Beaune-la-Rolande, and from there to Drancy, and then to Auschwitz, where Jacques perished on August 12, 1942. Frajda remained in Paris with Blanche, surviving by moving from house to house until Frajda found a hiding place for Blanche on a farm in the countryside. After the liberation of France, Frajda picked up Blanche, and they returned to their former apartment in Paris.

"WHERE..."

We went back searching for your seventy-year-old beginning

Where the last of your people embraced you at the doorstep

Where you later stumbled and curled up in that corner

Where I reached out to comfort you

Where they stopped me and said

Leave him to cry. This is why he came home.

By Cora Schwartz, a photo journalist and behavioral psychologist whose essays and short stories have been published in journals and periodicals. Her book, The Forgotten Few, was written and photographed to fulfill a promise she made to her late husband, Rudy, a survivor from Ukraine. Cora is a volunteer at the Hidden Child Foundation.

SEARCHING FOR HOME THE IMPACT OF WWII ON A HIDDEN CHILD

By Joseph Gosler

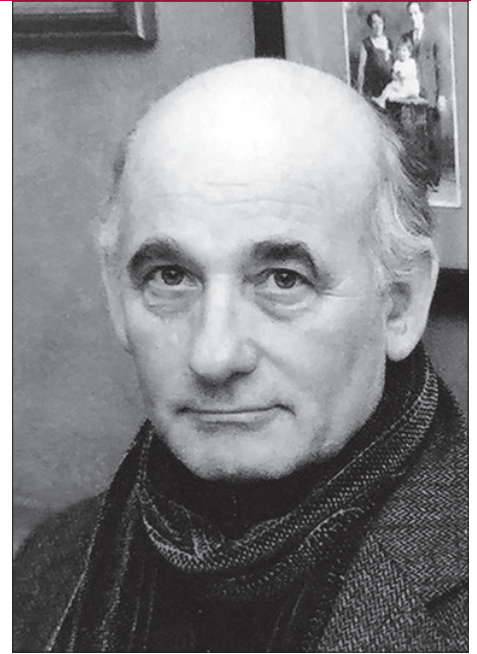
THE NETHERLANDS, 1942 - 1949

I was born on July 27, 1942, to Henriette Swartberg-Gosler and Maurice Gosler, in the provincial capital of Groningen, the Netherlands. My mother tells me the day I was born was a Monday morning, not really distinguished by anything unusual except for British bombers flying overhead. My birth certificate notes the birth name, Joseph Gosler, but my name would change several times during and after WWII. Every new name represented a segment of my life, ever connected like the canals that crisscrossed my birth city of Groningen. Each experience and identity fused into another, shaping me into who I am today.

My mother grew up in the city of Assen, a short distance from Groningen. She came from an upper middle-class family that at one time owned a factory that produced burlap bags, and she had one sibling, her older brother, Leo. She believed herself to be a modern woman: she enrolled in bookkeeping classes after high school, studied to become a beautician, belonged to an athletic club, spoke several languages and was politically aware and socially active.

My father came from Groningen, from a working-class background. The middle child of six siblings, he was stricken with polio as a child and lost hearing in his right ear. He left school in the eighth grade, became a butcher, and like my mother, also belonged to an athletic club. Whether it was due to the polio or leaving school early, he was both timid and cautious with other people, yet unusually sincere. It was common in those days for brothers and sisters to marry into one another's family. After the marriage of my mother's older brother Leo to Maria, my father's older sister, my parents married in 1941.

A month before my birth, in June of 1942, the Nazi administration began



Joseph Gosler

the deportation of Jews, first to Westerbork and then to Bergen-Belsen, or to the various eastern European concentration camps, like Sobibor and Auschwitz. Although people were still employed, more and more restrictions were set on Jews in terms of where they could work, where they could shop and when they could leave their homes.

It became clear that if we wanted to survive, we had to leave Holland or go into hiding. The resistance movement had just developed. False identity papers were difficult to get. In retrospect, it seems strange to have a child during wartime, but I believe the Dutch, including most Jews, were determined to hold on to a sense of normalcy, even if it was out of a sense of desperation. It may even have been a form of personal resistance to have a child at a time of daily Nazi raids and roundups. That was the paradox of life in Holland, at least through 1942, and since I never heard that my birth was accidental, I must assume that my parents felt secure enough to have me.

On the surface, my birth and infancy were no different than any other young child's, except that I was Jewish, and my father, Maurice, had been arrested and sent to a forced labor camp near Kloosterveen at a time when my mother was pregnant with me.

At the camp, he worked 16-hour days and had no means of escape. My mother sent him a letter, stating that she was

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ill, and asked if there was a way for him to come to her. Although the Nazi stranglehold on everyday life was becoming crystal clear, here was an example of the schizophrenia of wartime Holland, because my father received a three-day pass. He came to us in August of 1942 when I was one month old.

After three days, my father was ready to return to the camp, but my mother noticed there was no return date stamped on his pass. My parents argued vociferously for hours about this error. My father, ever true to his word, had every intention of going back until my mother convinced him otherwise. My father's typical Dutch sense of civic duty and honor that was evident through every strata of society would have cost him his life had he not been saved by my mother.

Worrying that the administration at Kloosterveen would find the omission, we and my widowed maternal grandmother, Martha, left Groningen and travelled to Amsterdam. The city still had the largest Jewish quarter in Holland, and they hoped that it still held the promise of shelter, extended family and community.

On the road, we stayed at small family farms, never remaining more than a single night, and usually leaving at dawn. We kept away from train transportation, which was watched all the time, travelling instead in the countryside by foot, bicycle and local buses. The trip, which normally took three hours by train, took us four days.

The Jordaan or Jodenbuurt (Jewish neighborhood) of Amsterdam was still a thriving quarter of nearly eighty thousand Jews. Many families could trace their family roots back four centuries. The Nazis had effectively turned the neighborhood into a ghetto, forcing various restrictions on movement, whether beyond the ghetto or during nighttime, but the mass deportations and the more extreme measures were still to come.

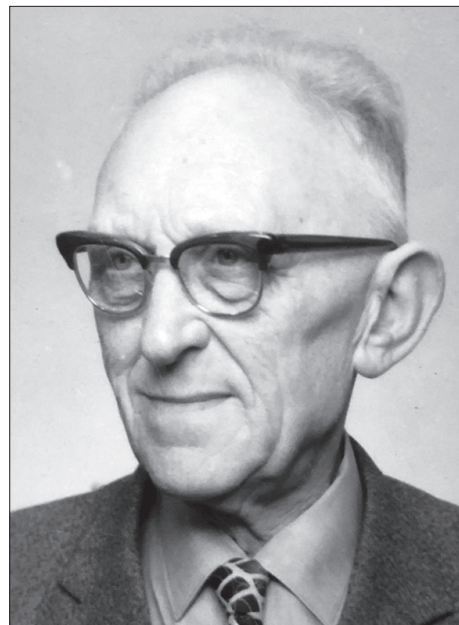
It was October 1942, and though life was more sobering, it was still manageable. We found a place to live and my father found day labor, but my parents could tell this was just a reprieve. The storm was near and more restrictions were placed on the Jodenbuurt.

The Jewish Council, serving as police and record keepers, kept the community in check, while the nightly Gestapo raids surgically removed any "troublemakers." It became somberly clear to my parents

that they needed to remain mobile and flexible and that I undermined that possibility.

The new Dutch resistance movement, although primarily engaged in intelligence gathering for the Allies, also had a mission of saving Jewish children. Through their friends, my parents contacted someone from the Resistance, and a plan and a place to meet were devised.

At seven or eight months old, at an age when an infant can barely see beyond his mother's breast, I was taken from my parents. In March 1943, a nursing student on



Rescuers, Vader Dijkstra and Moeder Dijkstra.

hunters, the Dutch police, and civil servants paid by the Nazis to ferret out the Jews and other undesirables.

My parents and grandma decided to travel to Gelderland, an agricultural province southeast of Amsterdam. They hoped to work and hide on one of the many small farms that dotted the fertile plains. The distance between Amsterdam and Gelderland was less than fifty miles.

Each day, they travelled at dawn, carrying valises filled with their meager belongings. They stayed off main roads and looked for shelter and food for each



a bicycle with a basket came to our house, bundled me in a quilt, placed me in the basket, and peddled off into the darkness.

Much later in my life, my parents told me about their feelings at that time: they were in a state of controlled fear and numbness. Full of remorse, yet relieved, they hoped I would be safe, but there was no guarantee they would ever see me again. From time to time, they received news about me, and once they even got a wrinkled photograph of me sitting next to a fat cat.

Living in Amsterdam became progressively worse. With deportations and nightly raids, my parents remained there for another three months. Each day became more dismal: informers were everywhere; you could trust no one, and work was impossible to find. There were bounty

night. The journey was particularly hard on Oma Martha, who found it difficult to walk long distances.

One night, while sleeping in a small barn, my mother woke up convinced that their host had informed on them. The gut feeling meant they had to leave immediately. Needing more time to rest, my grandmother decided she would meet them later in the day. They never saw her again, and later learned she was taken by the SS police, deported, and murdered in Sobibor. When I was much older, I became painfully aware, as had my parents, that instinct and timing spelled the difference between life and death, and, ironically, that we were born under lucky stars.

My journey was gentle as compared to my parents' and grandma's. I was placed

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with Meneer and Mevrouw Dijkstra, a Christian family in Wageningen, a small city near the Rhine River, and by coincidence also in Gelderland.

My wartime family consisted of “Vader,” a landscape architect, “Moeder,” a housewife, and their two daughters, Anneke and Folie, who were fourteen and eleven years old respectively. Both girls had straight blond hair and blue eyes, in contrast to my wavy dark brown hair and hazel-green eyes.

Not long after my arrival, the Dijkstras added me to their family register and I was called Peter Dijkstra, or Pietje. Safe and content with the only family I knew, I cannot remember whether I missed my



Joseph in hiding with the Dijkstra family, 20 months of age.

mother, or the familiarity of my parents’ home, or the warmth of my mother’s breast and smell of her skin, but my childhood with the Dijkstras was as wholesome as wartime would allow.

I was Pietje Dijkstra, the son of Moeder’s sister, who had died soon after giving birth to me. Some neighbors knew I was Jewish and this awareness frightened Moeder and Vader. They constantly reminded their daughters to be careful to ensure that neither one would accidentally tell Pietje’s true story to one of their friends.

One day, while I was playing with other young children in the street, a platoon of Nazi soldiers and tanks came rolling by. The other children scampered to the

sides, but whether numb, curious, dumb or defiant, I remained in the middle of the street. The other children motioned for me to move to one side or the other, but I didn’t move. Miraculously, the troops divided into two streams as they passed me by. Moeder saw all of this from the front yard, and ran to retrieve me, but they had already passed. These were dangerous times, but from my two-year-old eyes it was part of my everyday existence.

In 1944, on the Eastern Front, the Red Army and a particularly harsh winter combined to freeze the Nazi machine from pushing forward into Russia. At the same time, Canadian forces were nearing the Rhine River from the west. Food was scarce, and the Canadian bombing flights meant that we spent much time in our tiny cellar.

During those evenings I sat quietly on Moeder’s lap, while Anneke and Folie sat between her and Vader. We wore extra layers of clothing to ward off the damp cold. A single overhead light bulb flickered, but surprisingly remained lit for long periods of time. Vader or Anneke would read books to us; songs were sung, and the collective hum of airplane engines overhead blended to create white noise that lulled me to sleep.

My underground family began to pack valises and trunks with the idea of going further north, to Moeder’s family, who lived on a small farm in Friesland. Nestled in the countryside they hoped would spare us from the bombing, the harshness of daily life, and the fear of betrayal.

My life seemed relatively normal. In contrast, my parents were not as fortunate. They lived with false identities: my mother, Yetta, was now “Dina Elisabeth Buttikhuis,” and my father, Maurice, was “Sijbe Wjaarda.” My mother, Dina, was a small woman, about five feet tall with brown hair and thick glasses. Her grey-blue eyes and plaster-white skin suggested she was not of Jewish descent, and this allowed her a degree of safety. On the other hand, my father, Sijbe, was a little taller and muscular, nearly bald, and the hair that was left, was dark and almost kinky. His brown eyes, full lips and tanned skin, betrayed Judaic ancestry.

Sijbe worked in an institution for the insane in Rekken (Gelderland), while Dina lived on a farm not too far away. Between late 1944 and early 1945 as the Nazis began their retreat, life became even more

perilous, and they often moved from one farm to another in the surrounding countryside.

Their luck ran out when they were arrested in Doetinchem in March 1945. My father was sent to Westerbork the following day, and my mother—believed to be a Christian—was beaten for living with a Jew. She received a stern warning that if she was ever caught associating with a Jew again, she would be killed.

In the beginning of spring 1945, in the south of Holland, near Maastricht, the fighting had stopped and the people were free to walk the streets. It was not until May 11 that the rest of Holland was freed.

It was a period of euphoria. It was also a period of hysteria, hate and vengeance. These were frantic times, and many victims felt all these emotions simultaneously. Adding to this and the physical turmoil, the economy was in chaos.

It took weeks before my mother knew if my father was still alive. They reunited after he made his way back to Gelderland on a bicycle with wooden wheels.

The two months at Westerbork had taken a toll on him. His feet were bleeding, his lower back was debilitated, and he had lost 35 pounds. The stress and despair he felt, and the oppressive labor, had left him gaunt and listless. But at least they were together again, and my mother was ten weeks pregnant with my sister, Marja. It took my parents another four weeks to find me and to finish the legal paperwork before they could embrace the child they had given away.

Three years had passed. The baby they remembered had not only changed physically, but had wrapped himself, emotionally and psychologically, in the arms of the Dijkstra family. My parents were strangers. I did not recognize them, and wanted to return to my “real” parents. I was confused and angered by the loss of my underground family.

We were back together again, but each member was forever damaged by the experience of war. We went north to Groningen. My parents were shattered by the loss of their family—parents, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles, and cousins. Moreover, they lost their homes, jobs, careers, friends and—more importantly—their spirit. Each day bled into another and they were consumed by painful memories. My parents were in an endless state

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of mourning.

At three years old, I was still wrapped in my own innocence, but cracks were beginning to form on my porcelain psyche. Although reunited with my real parents, I felt abandoned by the only family I knew. I cried for Moeder. I was angry, anxious, distant and confused. I trusted no one.

The war had ravaged us all. In early summer, my mother suffered a nervous breakdown. The feelings she held in so valiantly during the war, tied up in neat, little, sealed boxes, now popped out like a grotesque jack-in-the-box, and she was overwhelmed by sadness and rage. She could barely move; her thoughts were absent and her spirit was not to be found.

My father, emotionally void, could not help her either, and was desperately looking for work. My parents were so needy and self-absorbed that the normal bonding between me and my parents did not occur until much later in life. It is also possible that my longing for Moeder and Vader and my inability to forgive my own parents, delayed the bonding process even more.

Struggling with severe depression and fatigue, my mother experienced the life forming inside her, and the healing grace of time itself helped her regain some emotional footing. My father found a job as an electrical supply salesman and a semblance of order developed in our home.

I did not know it at the time, but the cracks in my psyche were ever more recognizable. What could a three-year-old know about the after-shocks of being a hidden child. For that matter, what could anyone know? I was confused and could not understand or accept why I was separated from Moeder and Vader.

Within weeks after they claimed me, I found a box of matches and promptly set the bathroom window curtains on fire. My parents were alarmed, but this was not a time when adults were psychologically aware. They did not understand it as a cry for help, an expression of my inner anguish, my way of displaying rage, or my longing for Moeder and Vader. I wanted to go home. I yearned for my other life. The pain was overwhelming, cumulative and remained raw.

In time, the family gained some normalcy, if not vibrancy: Poppy had his job and Mommy tended to us. Marja was nearly two and I made friends with Dimo,



Joseph with baby sister Marja; Groningen, 1946.

a boy who lived nearby. Still, my restlessness persisted. I felt stuck, controlled, and possibly still exposed to danger.

At our home, Marja and I would play together, though our age difference dictated that I would play or perform and Marja would watch. At the time, I liked playing with finger and hand puppets, using different voices to personify different emotions and characters, and to develop my own fantasy world. Marja was a great audience. But she was more than that, she filled part of the emptiness that I felt. Guiding her, and being the “big” brother, gave me stature and meaning, which helped counterbalance the distance I felt towards my parents—a separation I could not understand, a distance that narrowed only when I was much older.

My parents were planning to move. The post-war economy in the Netherlands had not rebounded. My father was dissatisfied with his job, and the nightmare ghosts of war were ever present. They needed a new environment, to distance themselves from the memories that continued to haunt them.

They attempted to get visas for America, but applied very late. It would be years before a “host” could be found and visas to America were secured. On the other hand, Israel was in its first year of existence and was eager to embrace new arrivals. After months of planning, packing and a series of goodbyes to a small group of family and friends, the Gosler family waved their final goodbye and

boarded the train for Marseille, France, for the cargo ship that would take them across the Mediterranean. Once again, I was displaced, separated from all that was “home” and secure.

ISRAEL, 1949 – 1953

We were not prepared for kibbutz life, and we each experienced it very differently. The separation of children from their parents, a heavenly reality for me, was hell for my parents and sister.

I craved the distance from my parents, the independence to wander, and looked forward to the camaraderie of children my age. The distance from my parents allowed me the precious psychological space to sort things out and to begin to understand who I was. I felt totally smothered, bewildered, and resistant to my parents’ attention, and subconsciously still mourned my own losses. The kibbutz was a perfect haven.

Yet, my parents and sister found it difficult to adapt. The traditional family unit so ingrained in their consciousness, was undermined and everything they used or wore was communally shared. While I needed distance from my parents, Marja’s needs were just the opposite. Even in Holland, Marja intuited that Mommy was emotionally fragile and self-absorbed, and Marja felt neglected. At least a few evenings per week, for quite a while, she made her way to our parents’ bungalow and would wake up sleeping in their bed.

As she grew older, she became more independent, so much so that at age five she was hitchhiking and wandering off by herself along the main road outside our kibbutz, Beit HaShita.

This sense of independence, that I also shared, was very much the result of living on the kibbutz. Experiencing relationships beyond the nuclear family, as in this communal setting, was as much a transition of emotional connectedness as it was a shift in one’s political consciousness. To my mother’s chagrin, no longer was the traditional home and family the only place of safety, the kibbutz and the surrounding community were as well.

My father, now “Moshe,” worked with the livestock and spent most days outside. He was a shepherd, and each morning he would take his flock to the valley and fertile hillside where there were many streams and lush grasses. The

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warm breezes, the sounds of turtle doves and the incessant baas of sheep, created a soothing rhythm to his day.

Moshe was at peace when he was outdoors, whether tending to his sheep or planting seeds in the earth. He was energized and was deeply consoled by nature's hum. My father flourished in the kibbutz, but the same could not be said for my mother. She was prone to sinus- and stress-related headaches, and depending on how hot and humid it was, would sometimes have difficulty breathing. Her daily work shifted between the cafeteria, the laundry and the library. She washed the dishes and pots, and washed and ironed the clothing. She didn't mind working indoors—in fact she preferred it—but it certainly wasn't as fulfilling as my father's work. Besides, my mother felt that this work was not up to her stature. When she worked in the library it was different, because there she could take time to read a magazine or rifle through shelves of books. She felt lonely and found it difficult to adapt to kibbutz life. In Holland, she had her own home, her own clothing, and her children. Now everything was shared, clothing, property, and children. Her children no longer identified only with her, they identified with an extended family, a whole community. This was hard to accept, especially for a woman who had survived the war.

One individual who had a profound impact on me was Beersheba, my Hebrew tutor. A soft-spoken woman in her thirties, Beersheba had black hair, speckled with grey that she wore in a single long braid. I don't know whether I was the only child being tutored at that time, but I felt special. I soaked up the affection and understanding, and because I was deeply bruised, I thought I kept my true self hidden from view.

Daily, this woman tutored me in Hebrew, gave me books, allowed me to come late to class, and basically nurtured me in a way my mother could not, or I would not allow. I became a prolific reader. The greater command I had over the Hebrew language, the more I read. I was eager to learn, to escape and to block out what I couldn't control.

The daily routines for a six-year-old were quite consistent. I didn't mind it being so specific; in fact, it gave me structure and security. I knew what to expect and what was expected of me. I awoke



Class trip in Israel; Joseph is in the second row, in front of the teacher.

at 6:30, washed, brushed my teeth and dressed. We were all dressed alike: short khaki pants with shoulder straps that buttoned in front and back and a short-sleeved light-colored shirt. After dressing we went out, and led by an adult or a teenager, we ran barefoot, through various terrain in and around the kibbutz.

I enjoyed those vigorous runs, and looked forward to the breakfast that followed. After a morning of classes, we would take our lunch to the fields. I never grew tired of the black bread, slathered with mayonnaise and filled with scallion greens, that was "baked" by the noonday sun.

In the afternoon, we worked in the fields, harvesting grapes, eating some and taking little snoozes in the shade of the vines. Sometimes, we spread large tarps around olive trees, milked the branches of green olives, then scooped them off the canvas and packed them into wooden crates.

Free time after dinner was devoted to playing games on the big lawn near the dining hall. The lights would go out in the dorms about 8 p.m. Although it sounds monotonous, to me the daily experience was rich, sweet, predictable and secure, and created a rhythm that was as soothing as it was exhausting. The sky was clear and I slept deeply.

One night after the lights were turned off, I snuck out of the dorm and climbed a concrete wall. There was a full moon and my shadow was long as I walked on top of the wall connecting the two dorms. The wall was meant to divide the rest of the

kibbutz from the dorm area, so that the children could feel secure and intimate within their surroundings. It was a foot thick and over nine feet high but I didn't have any trouble navigating it.

Where was I going, especially at that hour? The mystery was resolved a few days later. It seems that I quietly strolled into the other dorm and came back a few minutes later with a large stamp album. But, unlike other thieves, I shared "my" new stamp album with all the other children.

Naturally, I was caught, embarrassed and forced to return the album to its rightful owner. I still felt like the outsider, envious of the popularity of other children, and I had hoped the album would make me accepted by my peers. It did the opposite.

Every day of those first six months was fraught with conflict and awkwardness. There were bullies everywhere, and I was the new kid, the Dutch boy. The more conflict I experienced, the more I distanced myself, and the more time I spent in the library with Beersheba. I felt lost as in the middle of a bridge, stuck between an alienating kibbutz experience and the distance felt towards my parents. It came as no surprise that I rarely visited my parents' bungalow.

There were exceptions though, and on one such occasion my father could tell that I was unhappy, and more importantly that I seemed hurt, physically. I had a large welt and a couple of scratches under my left eye, a bruised arm, and a slightly

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swollen lip.

My father, not known as a big talker, teacher or supervisor—preferring the role of simple worker and problem solver—asked me what had occurred. Never wanting to show my vulnerable side nor wanting to add to their burdens, I said, “I fell into a hole.” There was a pause, and he replied, “Well the next time you fall in a hole take a stick with you.” I took the hint.

A week later, I no longer had problems with these boys, and one of them, Alon, became my close friend. My childhood, uneven at best until then, now flourished. I felt as though a major weight had been lifted off my shoulders. A burst of energy I never experienced before enveloped me. New friendships formed, adolescent adventures abounded. It was an exhilarating time. Finally, I felt I belonged!

But this bounty of joy was not to last. Although my father, sister and I were thriving in kibbutz life, my mom couldn’t adjust. Four years had passed and she still suffered from headaches and occasional shortness of breath. She still longed to be closer to her extended family and was less happy with the climate and the communal nature of kibbutz life.

In early 1953 we left the kibbutz, with the intention of immigrating to the US. The move itself seemed quite simple because all we carried was some clothing, photos, jewelry and other small mementos. Marja and I felt a tremendous loss. Uprooted yet again, I felt a loss of community, security and friendships that I had finally attained. Those feelings could never mend, and trust was ever fleeting.

AMERICA, 1953 - 1960

Our family stayed in Brooklyn with Tante Judith and her husband, Oom Caballes. I do not remember much of our stay, but I had a sense that our hosts and my parents were glad, after a five-month stay, that we left when we did.

In late spring we moved to Rockaway Park, to a house where other relatives had stayed previously. The red brick house was close to the beach and boardwalk. We lived in the basement and entered the house through a concrete paved rear yard. My parents were eager to find work and my mother began cleaning nearby homes, while my father got a job (through Tante Rose) in the garment industry.

During that summer, I combed the beach for empty bottles, two cents for

a small bottle and five cents for a large one. In my pursuit of pocket change, I was keenly aware of life on the beach. My observations, like a voyeur, made me acutely aware of how detached I was, not just as a foreigner, but how empty I felt inside. I wanted to recapture the independence and camaraderie of the kibbutz, of belonging to a community and working on shared goals. I longed for Israel! I sensed



Joseph in Israel, age 7.

that my parents were at a crossroad, though happy to be in America, they were neither comfortable nor content, and they argued a lot.

The following summer, in 1955, our family moved to a chicken farm in Monticello, NY. Poppy was eager to get away from the garment industry work and looked forward to working on the farm, where he was hired as the foreman. For me it was yet another emotional earthquake, where I had to once more leave the familiar, all that had become home—my friends and my neighborhood—and move to places unknown. I entered Monticello Central High as a seventh grader—again, the outsider in a tight-knit community that had many unwritten rules.

The owners of the 150-acre farm were Russian Jews, who tended to 150,000 chickens. Although the farm was mostly acres of open fields, the coops and other

buildings, including several trailers, were concentrated on approximately three acres near our living quarters.

The main house was large enough to accommodate all of us; the two households of the joint owners, as well as the grandparents, who had a separate apartment in the back. At first, we lived on the first floor, squeezed in between the two owners’ families. I am sure that my mother must have thought she was back in the kibbutz, where she had a lack of privacy, and little she could call her own.

Both grandparents died within two years after our arrival, and we were given their modest apartment. At last we had a separate entrance, privacy and a place we could call home.

My father took his job with the same sincerity, dedication and loyalty that he displayed to everyone and everything. He collected the eggs, put them in round metal mesh baskets, and dutifully dragged two baskets, each weighing about 30 pounds, in his hands to another building, where they were cleaned and candled by the owner, Florence, and my mother.

Marja, now aged eleven, attended the same school I went to, and slowly she developed her own set of friends. Somehow, though younger, she was less restricted by my parents than I was. I was not allowed to stay overnight at other people’s homes. My mother always waited for me to come home at night, even when I turned seventeen. But Marja, as a young teen, slept over at her friends’ homes quite often.

Giving me away as an infant, and having me return as an angry and disoriented three-year-old, had made my mother even more protective. I think she knew I had not forgiven her for abandoning me, and for taking me away from the Dijkstra family. What we had, at best, was a *détente*.

On weekends, the Concord Hotel was where I wanted to be, and realizing I could earn good money there, I applied for a position. My first job was hard to describe: one day I was serving hot cocoa, the next day I was handing out boots, skis and poles. I was willing to try anything and often convinced my supervisor that I was an expert at doing just about everything. Soon I became an elevator boy in the main building, then a page boy, and at times, I bell-hopped. I brought soda and ice to guests as part of room service, and

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I was a cabana boy who adjusted lounge chairs and umbrellas at the poolside. When I delivered phone call notices to the professional gamblers, I always got a tip in the form of a crisp dollar bill.

Those weekend jobs gave me plenty of spending money. In fact, I was earning more than my father. My father, who received free housing, eggs and chickens, had a modest salary. Sometimes I earned as much as \$100 a weekend. Although I would give most of it to my parents, the fact that it was all cash tips allowed me enough control to keep a chunk for myself.

As my contributions to the household grew, so did my demands. I had an opinion about everything, and realized that I carried an inordinate amount of authority in the family. I do not know what my father was like before the war, I do know that his spirit was crushed by the physical and psychological pain he had endured during the war and he never recovered from it. Reluctantly, he simply followed in my mother's footsteps. At the same time, my mother became more and more an advocate for me at my father's expense. I was her prince!

A wide gulf developed between my father and me, the Oedipal Complex was in full bloom as I competed for my mother's hand. I eclipsed my father's authority and became the center of our family. In fact, I loathed my father and felt embarrassed by him. It was no wonder that he sought refuge in his 1955 second-hand Buick. The Buick, became his private space, his sanctuary. My father spent more and more of his free time waxing and preening his big gleaming idol, while I filled the parental void as the disciplinarian and guardian of my sister.

I saw my father as a weakling and strived to be different and stronger. I understood that in this country, money was all powerful and worshiped. It was through those narrow lenses that I measured and evaluated people and the world I lived in, and my moral compass became further obscured.

Besides the role of financial supporter, I took on the roles of advocate and cheerleader. As a confidant and counselor, I not only advised my parents, but also became their representative when it was necessary to communicate with the outside world. My English language skills were quite good in contrast to my parents'

abilities, and they were happy to have me speak for them.

The more I played out these other roles, the more they distorted my fragile identity. What happened to that little boy who grew into a teenager, whose sense of self free floated between the ages of ten and twenty-five? Who was he really? Who was guiding him; who had his back? There were no role models. Where were the trusted elders to seek counsel from, or to bounce ideas off? There were no echoes, no responses, just the grinding of teeth at night.

NEW YORK CITY, 1974

I was determined to maintain my current lifestyle, but like "Mr. No Where Man" in the Beatles "Yellow Submarine," I was going in circles. With my long thinning hair, and wild mustache intact, I continued to work part time, smoke weed, play basketball, and I wanted to believe that I was still "on top of the moment." The sunshine was gone; I began to feel progressively isolated, fragmented and disconnected from myself, so much so, that it affected my sleep.

The walls seemed to shake at night, not just metaphorically, but literally because the bar below us had new ownership and shifted from great jazz to Latin disco.

At about three AM every morning, a booming microphone announced, "last dance," and suddenly the music amped up and the walls vibrated. There were uncontrollable vibrations running inside of me as well, as wave after wave of anxiety washed through my chest and stomach, making it difficult to breathe.

At times, it would also come on without warning during the day. I could not eat for fear I would suffocate, and at night when I finally fell asleep, I feared I would never wake up. This fear, which I was always able to tuck away and hide neatly inside fissures of my soul, now reigned unchecked, like a punishing wind across a barren landscape. I felt increasingly vulnerable, porous and defenseless, as if air could pass through me, and I feared I would be overwhelmed. I felt as though I had no body, no frame, that I was ethereal, wasting away, and susceptible to anything and everything.

The winter of 1974, we visited Amsterdam—as we did every year until 1980, while my parents lived in Holland. Crossing a heavily trafficked street, I asked my

mother to take my arm so I could guide her. She said, with an annoyed tone, "I don't need you; I can cross the street by myself." She may very well have said the same words before, or maybe I heard them for the first time.

In any case, I felt like my head was cut open and my brain was oozing out onto the cobblestone street, splattering my identity. My childhood had prepared me



Joseph with his mother and nephew Steven, 1972.

to function well on a landscape filled with moving objects; like the dancing bear, I was trained to dodge the bullets. But I was not ready for this! I felt profoundly rejected, disoriented, and angry. Didn't she realize I was her prince, her advocate and her protector? Now I felt gutted, diminished and demoralized.

A couple of months went by and I remained in the same dark and dank place. If not for Sheila, I don't know where this would have gone. I asked her to stay awake every night until I would fall asleep. Somehow, Sheila's love and patience gave me a sliver of serenity, so that I could sleep for a little while. Wine, which I had always loved, now served another purpose. It became a form of daily self-medication, dulling my senses. I realized that these actions were superficial and that I

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needed help.

I had never been in therapy. Whether out of fear of what might be found out, or the macho myth that real men didn't need outside help, I loathed and despised the idea of therapy. I was distrustful of the whole therapy process and this exacerbated my agony until I saw no other way. Fortunately, both Marja and Sheila, separately, were in therapy with the same ther-

apist, Millie. That the two people dearest to me knew a therapist was all important and made my decision easier.

"cure" myself. During one session, I asked about group therapy as an alternative. The dynamic of a group, though emotionally risky, appealed to me because I trusted groups more readily than individuals. I recalled my kibbutz experiences and the level of trust and friendships I felt within that setting. I truly believed that the family nucleus was eclipsed by the communal experience.

by what someone else said. It seemed like an archeological dig where each week I discovered a new foundational layer, revealing a mosaic of my feelings. I began to experience emotions other than anger. Eventually I owned them and gained the confidence that they were real and part of me.

My nightly anxiety waves did not cease, but were shorter. I felt that I could breathe without gagging, and I continued to participate in the group therapy sessions. I was no longer the outsider. I knew as much about each person as he or she was willing to share, and I appreciated the dynamic of the group and its commitment to honesty, without ceremony.

In that trusting environment, I exposed my feelings. I talked about my sense of loss, of abandonment and my lost innocence. I revealed my inability experientially to differentiate between pity and love, between anger and depression.

It wasn't until I entered group therapy, that I could focus on the anger deep down that I felt towards my parents, most notably my mother. I was guilt ridden and terrified to face my anger towards them. How could I be angry at them, after all they had gone through?! They had to send me away, for my safety as well as theirs, I rationalized. But they had done more, they took me away from Moeder and Vader, and without calculation, robbed me of my childhood.

It was not until I dealt with the anger I felt towards my mother that matters changed. At first, the anger towards her felt forced, but with time, effort, and support from the group, it began to feel real. The anger was washed with tears of joy, apprehension, and self-pity.

It also opened me to the feelings of love. No longer a frozen slab of marble, I was thawing out, able to distinguish my feelings and bursting with new vitality and hope. Not too surprisingly, our annual trips to Holland became more difficult to tolerate. My anger towards my mom made these brief gatherings awkward and bitter.

Concurrently, though my parents had moved to Amsterdam to be nearer to our extended family, they felt more and more lonely. Like many other WWII survivors, they could not overcome their wounds, lived solely through their children, and were psychologically unable to develop new roots, interests or friendships. This

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Left to right, Sheila, Marja, Mom, Pop and Joe at a family celebration in 1980.

After my first visit during which I described my background, my recent experience with my mother, my confusion and vulnerability, I met with her again. Therapy felt more like a game of chess where one observed the other player for clues about their state of being, before revealing something about one's self.

The process felt artificial to me and at some point, maybe in our fifth session, I felt as though we were in a verbal duel. I believed that I was more intelligent and my sense of superiority or intellect served as a wall, rather than a gateway, into the realm of the subconscious. I was defensive and did not trust anyone else to guide me, yet I understood that I needed to continue therapy.

It was clear to me that I could not

My first group session was more like a parody of the Bob Newhart show. I felt as though I was hovering above the room, observing these people sharing their trivial problems, and questioned why I was there. As I did under most circumstances, I assessed the room, watched the clock, and studied the faces of each person, including Millie's, and how they interacted within the group.

Then, out of the blue, I was asked by one member of the group, "So Joe, tell us about yourself?" The suddenness, made me scramble for words, as I tried to collect myself. I joked, "I am here to do research for the Bob Newhart Show." Silence filled the room, and Millie tried to shift the attention to another participant, but the person who had asked the question angrily retorted, "That's not funny, and don't waste our time!" Beet red, cornered with no place to hide, I apologized, just as Millie announced the end of the session. I left her apartment and scrambled down the stairs to avoid the awkwardness of small talk in the elevator and my embarrassment for acting so inappropriately.

I forced myself to go back the following week. Each week thereafter, at least for the first few months, was a revelation. I was astounded to find myself at times crying, venting in anger or deeply touched

created a dilemma for me and Marja. Although we wished them well, we, surprisingly, found the physical distance between us to be therapeutic. It lifted a burden we had carried since childhood.

We weren't ready for them to come back to New York, even though the Dutch government had changed its guidelines for WWII reparation eligibility. Now, recipients no longer needed to live in their native country, but could return to the countries they had adopted. When our parents approached us about returning to the US, with trepidation and awkwardness, I told them that we needed more time apart from them. The fragile child in me wasn't ready yet to forgive and forget. To our surprise, they did not go against our wishes and dutifully remained in Holland until 1980.

Anger and pity were no longer the only feelings I experienced. Love and empathy created a new balance for me. Skyscrapers cannot be built on quicksand, nor could my personal development be achieved without reducing my subterranean anger. Through trial and error, and even mechanically counting to ten before responding, my smoldering anger slowly subsided. Although mistakes were landmines that needed to be avoided at all cost, I became less rigid and relatively more tolerant.

With anger becoming more sporadic and less explosive, I experienced the pervasive fog of depression. For the first time, I no longer viewed myself as the last of the buccaneers, but instead as someone who was only good enough to wash toilets, a perspective that disturbed me deeply. Of course, neither of these self-sketches truly represented me, since they were extreme opposites.

I resisted change. I cherished my wild mustache and long hair and savored living in our tenement home. When an opportunity arose that would allow us to move two blocks north to an apartment building with an elevator, I envisioned that it was a move "uptown." The idea of recognizing and greeting people in the hallway and elevator, holding doors open and helping people carry their shopping bags, all the hallmarks of civility and good citizenship, were an anathema to me. I believed that these conventions would stunt my daily rhythm and enslave me once more, diminishing my spirit as it did when I was forced to work after school each day at

age fifteen. Sheila, on the other hand, was ready to move into an "adult" apartment, especially since it was affordable, rent stabilized and most importantly, had rooms with doors and privacy.

The change from the tenement to the apartment building was less traumatic than I thought it would be. Our sixth-floor, two-bedroom apartment was sunny, had oak parquet floors, an eat-in kitchen plus a real bathroom. The furniture and carpeting we brought over was scattered as neatly as we could, but we could still hear an echo whenever we spoke or moved about.

I quickly learned to tolerate the elevator greetings and small talk. In fact, we became part of a group of neighborhood people who formed the Good Food Co-op, a food co-op that has been functioning for over forty years. Moreover, I helped Saylor, our neighbor and the quintessential good citizen, to mulch the trees on our block. Living in our new home brought about some obvious and subtle changes in my life.

My mustache and long hair, which until then were my façade, my symbol of rebellion, counter-culture, and independence, now felt like a glued-on mask. I felt imprisoned by it. One night I could bare it no longer and unbeknownst to Sheila, I slowly, painstakingly, removed the mustache. At first the thick mustache resisted the razor, but eventually succumbed. It was astonishing how this small alteration changed my appearance and opened up new opportunities. The following morning Sheila shrieked with anger to find a different person in her bed. Her anger stemmed as much from not being told of what I was planning to do, as from the radical difference it made in my appearance. Soon thereafter my long hair was shortened as well, but this time I gave Sheila plenty of notice. The mask ripped off exposed me to new ideas, risk taking, and heightened my sense of self awareness. A new face, no longer hidden.

Whether it was the move to the apartment building, the results of therapy, or simply waking out of an endless slumber, I no longer wanted to live on the edges of everyday life, hiding within my own shadow and licking my wounds. Instead, I wanted to become a complete person, a mensch, regardless of the risks involved.

As my confidence grew and I understood myself more fully, I wanted to grow

in many ways, to gain new skills, find meaningful work and start a family. But what kind of work did I want to do? I enjoyed management and collaborating on projects, as well as bookkeeping and accounting, but hated the idea of "business." My work experience was spoiled by feelings of servitude and enslavement to my parents, by the boredom felt while doing mundane tasks, the narrowmindedness of fellow workers, and the general concept of making a profit. Flustered, I found it difficult to envision what direction was best for me.

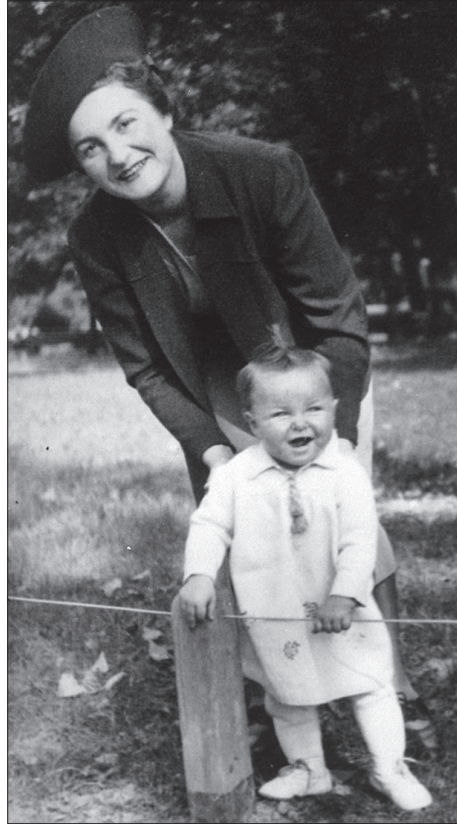
During one of my therapy sessions, I shared my frustrations and paralysis with my group. Someone who worked as an executive 'head hunter' said, "You mentioned that you were good in business matters and enjoyed working in day care centers and Head Start. Why not find a full-time job in a school, possibly as a business manager?" The title, Business Manager, Finance Director or Chief Financial Officer, was a revelation and I mulled it over. Business manager sounded just right. I had always enjoyed a nurturing school environment with people who had dreams and interests that I could identify with and whose collective purpose was to guide and support the development of children, and by extension, my development. ■

This article has been excerpted from the author's newly published book, Searching for Home: The Impact of WWII on a Hidden Child (ISBN 9789493056343) published by Amsterdam Publishers as ebook and paperback, available on Amazon, Barnes & Noble and in brick and mortar bookstores worldwide. Mr. Gosler's journey has often been a circuitous one, exemplified by the 20 years it took him to achieve his BA in History and MBA in corporate finance through the City University of New York.

For nearly 40 years he has worked in educational settings ranging from day care centers to private schools in the capacity of Business Manager. He and his wife Sheila founded a pre-school called Beginnings Nursery, have one son and live in New York City. Mr. Gosler retired from Friends Seminary in 2004, and today is actively involved in several Quaker projects, writing, gardening, traveling and walking his dog. "Searching for Home," the story of his life as a result of having been hidden during WW2, is his international debut.

OUT OF HIDING

By Sophie Turner Zaretsky



Sophie, age 1 year, poses with her mother, Laura Litwak Schwarzwald, in a park in Lvov. September 1938.

PHOTO CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, COURTESY OF SOPHIE TURNER-ZARETSKY.

As a member of a dwindling population of Holocaust survivors, I have certain responsibilities: to remember those who died, to pay tribute to the survivors, and to honor the rescuers – Jews and Gentiles – who at great peril to themselves and to their families made it possible for us to live when so many around us perished. This duty is also my legacy to my nearest and dearest, my sons Daniel and Jeffrey, daughter-in-law Andrea, and grandchildren Emily and Jack. They represent my victory over those who sought to annihilate me.

Over my lifetime I've had many roles: daughter, wife, mother, grandmother, aunt, physician, caregiver, and advocate. As a member of Graduate Women International, a Non-Government Organization accredited to the United Nations, I have advocated for girls' education and social justice. But

my most unusual role was as a survivor of a deadly game of "hide and seek," where the seekers were the Nazis and their collaborators, and their prey were Jews marked for genocide. Tragically, there was no Jewish homeland at that time, so there were very few possibilities for fleeing to safety. And so, Six Million individuals were murdered simply because they were Jews. One and a half million of them were children.

I was born on September 2, 1937, in Lwow, a city in eastern Poland (now western Ukraine) with a large Jewish population. I was the adored first grandchild in a large urban Jewish family. My parents were sophisticated, educated and secular. My grandparents were Orthodox. Everyone envisioned a comfortable life for me. But I was born in the wrong place, at the wrong time, when there could be no childhood, no adolescence, and no bright future for a Jewish child.

On June 29th, 1941, when Germany overran Lwow, conditions deteriorated immediately. Members of my family began to disappear, food was scarce, and I could no longer play. Parks were forbidden to Jews, and we were forced to move from our lovely apartment to the ghetto. My resourceful father, Daniel Schwarzwald, bought papers for my mother Laura, me, and my aunts, identifying us as Polish Christians. The local population enjoyed a windfall by selling their documents to desperate Jews, and then taking over their property.

On September 1, 1942, one day before my fifth birthday, my father did not return to us. He had gone to the Jewish Council to apply for accommodations for us in the ever shrinking Lwow ghetto. He was murdered by hanging, together with members of the Council. Their crime? They were Jews. *I was inconsolable. To this day I cannot forget nor forgive this evil.*

Shortly thereafter my mother and I shed our yellow stars, left the ghetto with our new identities, and fled to Krakow. My mother's younger brother, Emanuel Litwak was to join us, but he was recognized by a Pole, hanged by the Nazis, and became the second victim of a "lynching"

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in my family.

After experiencing fear, hunger, loneliness and cold, my mother, who spoke perfect German and Polish, found a job as a translator and bookkeeper for a Gestapo official in Busko Zdroj, a small Polish resort town. To protect us from Nazi roundups and from Polish opportunists and sympathizers, who identified Jews and handed them over to the Nazis for reward, my mother trained me to become a perfect Christian child. I completely forgot my previous Jewish past, and in a place without Jews, I became unaware of their ongoing slaughter.

In May, 1945, after several days of fighting in our vicinity, the Russian army beat the Germans and entered our town. From then on, we lived under a repressive Communist regime. Now they and the Poles, not the Germans, could turn on us. In fact, on July 4, 1946, there was a pogrom in Kielce, a town very near to us. Forty-two Jewish survivors who tried to return to



Sophie in 1945, dressed for her First Communion.

PHOTO CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, COURTESY OF SOPHIE TURNER-ZARETSKY.

their homes after the war were murdered while the church and the police stood by. My mother was determined that the two of us, and her youngest sister Ann Rozycki, who had also survived, leave Poland. It took three years to arrange our escape,

and every step posed a danger of being discovered as Jews. Moreover, the Communists who dominated Poland censored all mail, and regarded any communication with the West as treason.

Finally, in February, 1948, we left Busko by train, and after stopping in Warsaw, which had been almost completely flattened by the Germans, we made our way to the Polish port of Gdynia where we boarded the liner Batory. By some miracle, we were on our way to England where we had relatives who sponsored us. The United States had turned us down because the quota for immigrants from Poland was full.

At the beginning, our life in London was very difficult. Money was tight, we had to learn English quickly, we were stateless, but worst of all, I had to face the shocking revelation that I was Jewish. I regarded this as a catastrophe, because in Poland I had been taught to despise Jews. Should we even have wished to talk about our history, there were no support services available for refugees like us. Moreover, no one was interested. We were left to manage mostly on our own — and so we did.

Gradually, life settled down. I went to school, and did well. I was accepted to medical school, became a physician and eventually settled in New York, where I met and married David Zaretsky, an American Jew. We had two sons, who I am proud to say have a strong connection to their Jewish heritage. I had a successful career as a radiation oncologist.

I almost never spoke about the Holocaust, particularly as it pertained to me. Several events propelled me to examine my past and its effects on me. Starting with the First International Gathering of Hidden Children in New York in 1991, which was a watershed experience, I finally felt I belonged to a group of people who understood me perfectly, and with whom I had a great deal in common. In particular, I was given permission to realize that I too was a survivor, and that I too had been a victim of terrible injustice and trauma. This was particularly significant because I had been told time and time again by people who should have known better that only my mother had suffered, and that I, as a child, could not have understood what was going on around me. Neither the disappearance of most of my family, and especially the loss of my father, nor the bombings, hunger, cold, loneliness, and fear that I had expe-

rienced were acknowledged.

The second event was the opening of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC in 1993, which I attended with my husband. The ceremonies and the tour of the Museum were wrenching. Since I had donated personal articles to



Sophie poses with a novice nun at a summer camp for orphaned children at a convent in Rabka, Poland. 1947.

PHOTO CREDIT: UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM, COURTESY OF SOPHIE TURNER-ZARETSKY.

the Museum, including a photograph of me in my first communion dress, I was the subject of an article in my local paper, which exposed my past to the community where I lived and worked, making continued “hiding” impossible. The revelation resulted in an outpouring of empathy by both my colleagues and my patients. A line had been crossed into my personal sphere which caused me great distress.

The third event was a chance meeting with author R. D. Rosen in 2010. Richard, a Jew born in the Midwest, became interested in the experiences of Hidden Children after hearing my story. A series of interviews over a period of several years brought up long buried memories. The result was the

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book *Such Good Girls: The Journey of the Holocaust's Hidden Child Survivors*, published in 2014, focusing on me, Flora Hogman, Carla Lessing, and our entire largely ignored group of Hidden Children.

Each of these events resulted in my remembering a little more about the past, and in restoring many gaps in my memory. Memory loss has been described as a protective device in trauma victims, and breaking through the barrier was depressing and anxiety-provoking. However, publication of the book made it possible for me to finally “come out of hiding.” It gave me, literally, a voice: for the first time I was able to speak in public without the severe anxiety and even panic attacks that I had experienced until then.

Now that I'm retired, I have the opportunity to think about the past and the future. While I still can, I am trying to fulfill my obligation to my children, my grandchildren, my family — and posterity — to share my experiences and the lessons I have learned. I also feel that by telling my story I am speaking for survivors who have been so traumatized by their past that they are unable to speak for themselves. We, child survivors of the Holocaust, will soon be gone and there will be no witnesses left to answer individual questions about life before, during and after the Holocaust. After all, there is hardly anyone alive now who can answer our questions.

It is my firm belief that survivors are heroes. They fought to save themselves, their loved ones, and especially their

I FINALLY FELT I BELONGED TO A GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO UNDERSTOOD ME PERFECTLY, AND WITH WHOM I HAD A GREAT DEAL IN COMMON.

children against insurmountable odds. We need to preach this message to our young people, instead of dwelling on negative portrayals of Jews as victims. With limited weapons, Jews did fight against annihilation during the war. We were surrounded by killers on all sides, and the world was unmoved by our plight. In many instances, the Nazis were aided

by Poles, Ukrainians and others, not only because of their Anti-Semitism, but also their greed. Once Jews were forced from their homes, their belongings were plundered by the perpetrators.

Sadly, genocide and conflict are still a fact of life, and survivors can be — and are being — useful as mentors and

role models for victims of war, genocide and other forms of terror. As more and more people, and especially children, are exposed to fear, violence and loss, our stories are increasingly important in showing that, in spite of our permanent scars, we can still lead a full life. While our early years were difficult, sadness and ever-present anxiety have not pre-

vented many of us from doing just that.

It is noteworthy that many children who survived the Holocaust have gone into professions such as medicine, mental health specialties, social work and the arts in order to help others. We are very sensitive to the suffering of people who experience trauma due to conflict, sickness, displacement, poverty or discrimination of any kind. Because we survived, when so many did not, we feel we have a responsibility to give meaning to our existence.

In spite of all the speeches and annual events commemorating the Holocaust at the United Nations and internationally, it is a shameful and unforgivable fact that anti-Semitism and attacks on Jews are again rampant, not only in the Middle East but also in Europe and the United States. The State of Israel, which survivors helped to build, is being vilified and denied its right to exist as a sovereign state, and it is under constant attack by the international community.

The cry of “Never again” is at great peril. We must all fight with everything in our power to prevent another Holocaust. *Jewish lives matter.* ■

MAPPING OUR HIDING PLACES

Hidden Children, researchers, and organizations are invited to participate in a long-term project of great significance, the mapping of places where Jews hid in all of Europe during WWII.

This project, initiated by Dr. Dienne Hondius, assistant professor of history at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, is the historian's newest method in obtaining a deeper understanding of what happened to Hidden Children and their families during the war. Digital and interactive maps are a powerful tool for visualizing histories, transferring information, and gaining new knowledge.

Your family's chronicles, memoirs, interviews, etc., will be brought together with those of others who were forced to hide in Europe during the Nazi era. Please send Dr. Hondius your (and/or your family's) hiding information, whether short or long, to build a more comprehensive digital map and database.

Here is the link to fill out a form for your hiding place(s): <https://arcg.is/jfT0y>

Any and all information, even if incomplete, will be appreciated. Send whatever you can, even if just a name. Dr. Hondius' aim is to complete the historical record on the hiding experiences of Jews during WWII. Now is the time to bring widely dispersed information together, and to preserve the records of European Jews during the Holocaust.

This project is envisioned to grow each year for at least the next ten years. For further information, please contact Dr. Hondius directly at: dhondius@gmail.com.



LOOKING FOR MY CHILDHOOD FRIEND CHAYA

By Esia Baran Friedman

The last time I saw Chaya, my old classmate from the Leyzer Gurwicz school, was shortly after the war when we both came out of hiding. Our parting words at the time were, "Let's not lose each other again."

During the Holocaust I was hidden in Vilnius, Lithuania. My mother found me shortly before the end of the war. After liberation, we still needed to protect ourselves from the evildoers who wanted more Jewish blood. Eventually, we returned to our old home, which had been occupied and later vacated by our former neighbors, Nazi sympathizers.

My mother and I were the only survivors from a well-known street that housed many Jews and had several synagogues. In Yiddish, the street was known as Groys Sznipiszik, and in Polish, it was called Wilkomjerska Ulica. Later, when Vilnius again became the capital of Lithuania, the street was renamed Ukmerges Gatve by the Lithuanian government.

The Szczeranski family owned one of the bakeries at number 52 or 54 Ukmerges Gatve. The father's name was Shimon, the mother's name was Rochl. They had three children: an older daughter, my friend Chaya, and a little boy. I no longer remember the other children's names. The family also employed a nanny whom we called, Naszcza. She would walk us all to school and we all spoke Yiddish. We also spoke Polish, Russian and Lithuanian, but Naszcza spoke to us only in Yiddish.

Since my mother and I were the only survivors, all mail that came for Jews on our street was given to my Mamma, who replied to each sender. Every letter would bring more tears to her eyes. After reading these letters, my Mamma and I would deliver them to our only surviving rabbi, Israel Gustman. Rabbi Gustman opened a *kehillah* and an orphanage for the few surviving children. He also helped us and other survivors cope with the great tragedy that had befallen the Jewish people.



Prewar photo taken in backyard of Baran home: Brother Zev, Esia, and Mamma (Ida Baran).

One of the letters my Mamma read was from Mr. Szczeranski's sister, an engineer who had worked for the Vilnius Electric Company. Before the onset of the war, when the Germans were approaching Vilnius, Miss Szczeranski and her father were evacuated. They and the other employees of the electric company fled to Russia. She wrote that her father died, and she is searching for any remaining family in Vilnius. As always, Mamma would give the same reply: "We do not know, but there is always hope." We took our daily walk to the *kehillah* to turn in the letters and to look for words of comfort from our rabbi.

About one year after the liberation, when I was on our street, standing in front of our home, I saw a little girl with blonde braids staring at our house. I had to look twice, for we no longer believed any of my elementary school friends were alive. I recognized Chaya Szczeranski and crossed the street to greet her. She appeared dazed, scared, and tried to leave. I said, "Chaya, you survived!" As she looked at me, I said, "Chaya, I am Esia Baran, and I survived in hiding. Please do not leave." She replied in Polish, "I do not understand Yiddish," to which I said in Polish, "How did you know I was speaking Yiddish?"

To ease her fears, I told her that her aunt is alive and looking for her. We hugged and cried together. I asked her how she survived, and she told me

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her story. Naszcza, her nanny, saved her. I asked her how that was possible since Naszcza was Jewish. It was a shock for me to find out that her nanny was a devout German Catholic. The nanny converted her to Catholicism and placed her on a farm owned by a doctor and his family, where she took care of the animals.

I told her that now she must come live with Mamma and me, and once again be a Jewish child. She answered



Prewar portrait of Esia Baran.

she was scared that her nanny will kill her. We agreed on a date to meet, and we would hide her in Rabbi Gustman's orphanage. My mother would provide the food for her and get in touch with her aunt in Moscow. With G-d's help we saved Chaya and restored her to our people. Mamma asked me to write to her aunt, giving her the good news that

her niece Chaya is alive.

We were all grateful that Naszcza had acted honorably in saving Chaya, but we did not realize how determined she could be. One day, Mamma opened the door and there stood Naszcza with two Polish men, members of the Armia Krajowa.* Naszcza wanted to know where Anna (Chaya) was. My brave mother said to them, "Are you are asking for Chaya, who is a Jewish child?" She again praised Naszcza for risking her life and saving Chaya.

Again, they asked, "Where is Anna?" Again, Mamma answered, "I have no idea where she is at the moment."

They told us they will kill us. Thank G-d my brother Zev, who had returned from the front and was ill, awoke and heard the uproar. He came out of the bedroom, wearing his Russian army uniform jacket, and holding a gun. He warned Naszcza and the two men that if they ever came near his family, he would take care of them all. My brother explained to them this is no longer a time of pogroms, of Nazis, or of their brutal collaborators. We never heard from Naszcza again.

Mamma set in motion plans to leave the land of our birth and to get out of Europe for good. I went to an agency that provided us with documents which enabled us to leave Lithuania. There, I recognized another classmate, Merel Fuks, with her older sister. I still wonder how we were able to cry. We cried, we hugged, we screamed, we held on so tight for fear we would once again lose one another.

Watching us was a very pretty lady. She stood like a statue, crying along with us, and then, grabbing us, she said "Yiddishe Kinderlach," while hugging, holding, and kissing us. And once again, we all cried together.

The lady told her story. She said her niece was found alive and that a little girl wrote her a letter, and because of that letter, Moscow gave her permission to travel to Vilnius to unite with her niece Chaya Szczeranski. I told her I am the one who wrote the letter. And so more crying, and kissing, and hugging.

It was our great joy when my mother, Chaya's aunt, and I went to the orphanage to witness the reunion.

Since then, I am still looking for Chaya, my dear childhood friend. ■



Esia on her tricycle. Prewar.

*After WW2, the Armia Krajowa was a disbanded Polish anti-Nazi resistance organization.

Eventually, Esia and her family ended up in the DP camp of Linz in Austria. From there they immigrated to the US through the sponsorship of her mother's brother. They were welcomed to America by her mother's grandparents, and many aunts and uncles who had settled in Meriden, Connecticut, decades before the war. Esia attended high school in Meriden, and continued her studies at the University of Connecticut and the University of Hartford. She spent 30 years as a teacher in the Meriden Public School System, where she also taught ESL, adult education and citizenship classes. Also, she taught at her local Hebrew School (Temple B'nai Abraham) in Meriden, and was an adjunct instructor at Middlesex Community College. She was chairman of the Yom Hashoah Commemoration Committee of the Greater Hartford Jewish Community Center. Esia was honored as a "Woman of Valor" by the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford, and was president of Congregation Agudas Achim in West Hartford, where she also led a Yiddish language discussion group. Esia, now a widow, has two sons, Dr. Barry Friedman and Rabbi Cary Friedman, and six grandchildren.

MY NAME IS SAMUEL, ANDRÉ, DEDÉ

By Samuel Lauber

My family was originally from Poland: my mother, Sala, née Laufer, was born in Sucha; my father, Aron Lauber, came from Chrzanow. My sister was also born in Poland, in 1925. Seeking a better life, all three went to Antwerp, Belgium, in 1934, where my parents created and sold artificial flowers at their shop, L'Orchidée. I arrived at a most ill-fated time, in 1942, on the first day of Passover.

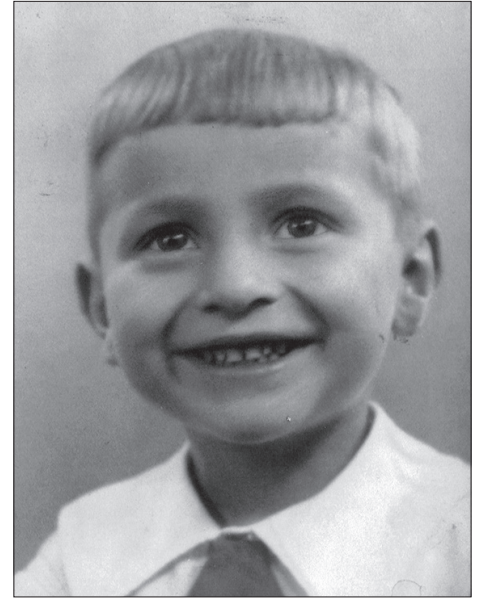
When the Nazis overran Antwerp, we left everything behind and fled to Brussels. But by the summer of 1942 there was no safe place for Jews anywhere in Belgium. And by the spring of 1943, Jews lived under the unrelenting threat of German roundups. Hoping to escape the Nazis' clutches, my father went to the train station to obtain tickets for our family. There, a stranger warned him that the Germans were checking everyone's identification.

Fear of arrest and deportation had intensified to the point that my parents now felt they had to find someone to protect me. My mother approached the mother superior of a nearby convent in Brussels. The brave woman immediately understood the urgency of our situation, and she arranged for a group of nuns to take me to a preventorium (an institution for children exposed to tuberculosis).

Along the way, the nuns ran into Nelly Detry, a pediatric nurse. When Nelly heard that I was not ill and that I needed to be shielded from the Nazis, she said she would speak with her mother, Laura Detry, to see if I could stay with her family in La Louvière. Madame Detry agreed, and I joined her family for the duration of the war.

Nelly told Mother Superior about my placement with the Detry family in La Louvière, and my parents learned about my hiding place. They received by-monthly notifications on my condition and activities.

I lived with the Detry family for a year and a half, and was treated as if I were their own child. Madame Detry had a playground built behind the house so that her son, Jean Marie, and I could play. Jean



Childhood photo of Samuel Lauber, also known as Dedé.

Marie and I bonded quickly and became 'brothers.' On Sundays, we all went to church, where, as a toddler, my only requirement was to be silent. One day Madame Detry asked my parents if I could be baptized. Their reply was an emphatic "no."

Yet, my presence with the Detry family presented a danger for all. Each member had to be mindful of prying strangers and neighbors, placing everyone in a constant state of anxiety. The cover story was that I was a distant cousin from another town. My name was changed to Dedé, a nickname for my middle name, André. Madame Detry provided me with all the basic necessities of life, never asking my parents for reimbursement.

During my hiding period, my sister visited me occasionally, sometimes taking me back to Brussels for short stays with my parents. Right after Brussels was liberated, she came to La Louvière to pick me up for the last time, and to bring me back home for good.

When I share my Holocaust story with audiences, people often ask me, "How did your parents survive the war? The answer is, I don't know. My parents never wanted to discuss the war and how they survived. Nor did my sister ever share her wartime experiences. From early fall 1944 until 1948, when I was six years old, we lived in Brussels, but I have no recollection of what we did during those years.

By 1948 it was time to leave the war
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and Belgium behind. My parents wanted to immigrate to the States where they had close relatives — my mother's parents, sisters and brothers, and my father's cousins. Though my father's brother and his family settled in Israel, my father felt there were more opportunities in the United States, and he believed I could get a good Hebrew education in New York. By then my sister had married, and she and her husband sailed to the U.S. separately.

STARTING ANEW

My parents and I boarded the Queen Elizabeth in Cherbourg, France, to begin our new life. As refugees we were limited to certain cabins and dining facilities. My parents got sea sick, but I didn't. My father and I toured the ship, and on Friday night, we attended a Jewish service in a makeshift

was able to secure a job in a fur shop in lower Manhattan. His work entailed sewing fur tails onto fur coats, which was very stylish in those days. My artistic mother opened an artificial flower shop in Herald Square, on 34th Street, near Gimbel's, the department store. Her customers included Lord and Taylor and Saks Fifth Avenue.

We settled in a tenement house on 100th Street between Amsterdam and Columbus Avenue in Manhattan. I was enrolled in a yeshiva. Speaking French only, I had difficulty with my studies in both Hebrew and English. I failed and was left behind in class years. The principal, Dr. Axelrod, told my father I had to leave. No consideration was ever given to the many upheavals I had withstood in wartime and postwar Belgium. Much to my father's chagrin, I had to enter a public school.

ahead. In retrospect, I can see that they were both very much affected by life's adversities, but mostly by the Holocaust — a period spent in dread of a *rafle* (raid) at any moment. Moreover, they worried about my wellbeing, and wondered if they would ever see me again. Such constant anguish exerted a considerable toll, both mentally and physically, on my mother and my father.

After my father died, I went to live with my sister and her family in Bloomfield, Connecticut. In 1961 I entered the State University of New York (SUNY) in Buffalo. In 1963, rather than being drafted into the U.S. Army, I enlisted in the U.S. Air Force. First, I was stationed at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas; then at Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois; and then at Niagara Falls Air Force Base, in

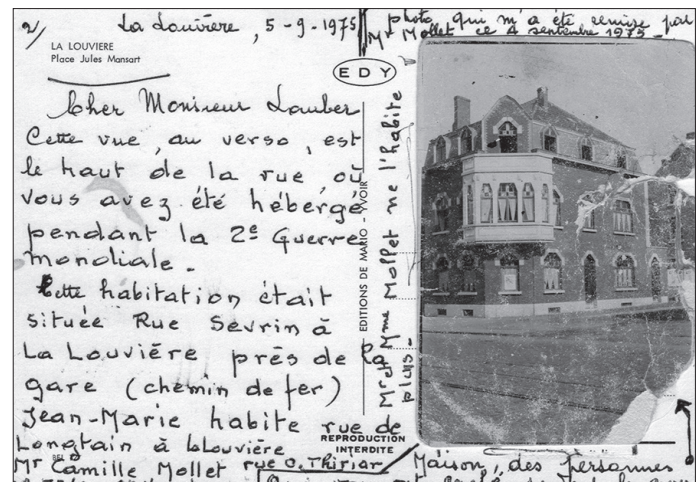


Photo and postcard, dated September 5, 1975, indicating the house and street in La Louvière where young Samuel was hidden by the Detry family.

shul. Some days I played shuffle board on the upper deck. The journey from Cherbourg to New York took one week. When we saw the Statue of Liberty, all the passengers cheered.

Once docked, we met with the admissions officials and with representatives of HIAS (Hebrew Immigration Aid Society) for processing. My father, who spoke mostly Yiddish, had an initial interview with Mary Haggerty, a counselor. Speaking through the aid of an interpreter, they focused on employment opportunities for both my parents. My father told the counselor he had extensive experience in the fur business, and he was referred to the vocation department of HIAS.

Through such assistance, my father

My parents attended evening classes to learn about their new country and to practice their new language. In 1954 they passed their citizenship exams and both were sworn in as new Americans. As a result of their citizenship, I too became a U.S. national.

Soon after my Bar Mitzvah, my mother died of kidney failure. She was only fifty-seven years old. In 1960, right after I graduated from high school, my father died of coronary disease at the age of sixty-four. Life had always been difficult for my parents — in Poland, in Belgium, and even in New York City. They had come to America in middle age after the biggest setback of their lives, starting once again from nowhere, while learning another language and working hard just to stay

Niagara Falls, New York, where, starting in 1965, I resumed my studies by taking night classes at SUNY Buffalo.

In 1967, after completing my four years of service in the Air Force, I rented an apartment in Buffalo with two classmates, and continued my undergraduate studies part-time while working full-time. Meanwhile, I maintained an active social life through Hillel, where I met my wife. We were married in 1970, and I graduated in 1971.

In 1973, we moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan, and I entered the University of Michigan to earn a master's degree in social work, with specialization in community organization. Once completed, I began a long career working for the American Fed-

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eral Civil Service in the U.S. and in Europe.

In 1983, after a stint in Hanau, Germany, I returned to the U.S. to work at the Philadelphia Navy Hospital as a Family Advocacy Representative, dealing with family violence on base. One Friday evening the Navy duty officer told me that a mother in the delivery room was relinquishing her



Young Samuel, or Dedé.



Son of rescuer, and former playmate, Jean-Marie Detry.

child for adoption. I called my wife, who said immediately, “Go to the hospital attorney and tell him you’re interested.” The hospital attorney told me that the federal government cannot get involved in state affairs. Not giving up, my wife replied, “Go see the hospital commander.”

So, ignoring the usual protocol of going through the chain of command, I went to the hospital commander, telling her that the mother in the delivery room wished to surrender her child and that my wife and I wanted him. She called the hospital attorney

to make the arrangements with a civilian attorney, and the adoption process began.

By Monday morning, we met with the child’s grandmother, the baby’s guardian because his mother was underage. The interview went well.

After passing many other hurdles — legal petitions, and background, financial and medical checks — we were awarded our son, and we officially became his parents

We returned to Europe as a family of three. First, we were stationed in Würzburg, Mönchengladbach, and Mannheim, Germany; then we relocated to The Netherlands. In 1991 I organized the Dutch/American conservative congregation in Brunssum. Since there was no rabbi, I conducted the services, and my wife made the necessary arrangements for the Dutch non-military people to attend our gatherings.

For the High Holy Days, a group of us went to SHAPE (Strategic Headquarters Allied Personnel Europe) near Mons, Belgium, because they had an American military rabbi conduct the services. On the expressway, I saw a sign for La Louvière. I wanted to stop to look for the Detry family, but the time was not favorable.

Yet that sign had rekindled a desire to learn more about the small child I had once been. The following month, my wife, son, and I made a separate trip to La Louvière. The address I had didn’t pan out. But when I called the telephone number from a phone booth at the hospital in La Louvière, Madame Detry replied, “Dedé c’est vous? (Dedé is that you?)”

Madame Detry picked us up and brought us to her present house, not the house where I was hidden. We spent three lovely days with her and her husband Camille Mollet. Madame Detry showed us pictures of the time I was with her in La Louvière. Jean Marie came over, and we hugged. Later we had dinner at Jean Marie’s house, and met his girlfriend who was warm and welcoming.

We returned to the U.S. at Wright-Patt Air Force Base and settled in Dayton, Ohio, where we still reside. At Wright-Patt Air Force Base my job as outreach program manager in mental health entailed conducting in-person suicide prevention briefings to all units on base and writing articles for the Skywrighter, Wright-Patt’s community paper on mental health issues. After twelve years I retired from Wright-Patt Air Force Base.

As a retiree with more time on my hands, I was able to renew communi-

cations with Jean Marie. In 2005, I corresponded with him, raising many questions, most of which he could not answer. For instance, he did not know the names or the order of the nuns who had brought me to Madame Detry. But he did write that when I lived with his family, I was “very kind, easy going,” and “we got along well together.”



Rescuer Nelly Detry

By sharing my story with numerous audiences, I relive my hiding period. For many years after the war I did not consider myself to be a Holocaust survivor. I could not attend the 1991 First International Gathering of Hidden Children in New York because I was stationed in Europe. But I did attend the 2006 annual conference in Detroit, Michigan, and participated in various workshops in the hope of finding other attendees who were hidden in La Louvière. None were. Still, getting together with others who were hidden was a very moving and healing experience.

As we grow older it becomes even more important that the Holocaust be remembered. This is our only hope to prevent history from repeating itself. I want my son to teach his children, and for this to become part of our legacy to future generations. ■

Excerpts of Samuel Lauber’s background appear in two books, The Holocaust Survivor Cookbook, by Joanne Caras, and A Gift of Life, by Sylvain Brachfeld. Mr. Lauber’s hobby is photography. His photograph of the Eiffel Tower in multi-image color appeared for several months at the Louvre Museum in Paris.

HOW I OVERCAME THE SHOCK OF A GERMAN SON-IN-LAW

By Cordula Hahn



Cordula Hahn's bookcase containing her father's cherished collection of German books.

It helped that his name was David, and that my daughter was in touch with her family's past, when I was told she intended to marry a German.

So why did I have to swallow so hard when I got the news over the phone from Europe, where at the time my daughter was living in the country where I was born, a country bordering dangerously with Germany?

My parents were German speaking Czech refugees. German was my first language — the language that loved me, and the language that reprimanded me when I misbehaved.

My parents, my older brother and I survived the war. At home, we spoke German; outside, we played with the neighborhood children and spoke their language without any accent.

My two languages divided me — separated me or attracted me to different loyalties. My country's flag is beautiful, the German flag is scary with an image in the center I believed to be the devil. We cried when our soccer team lost against Germany. I was terrified that my father would accept a position in Germany and a big fat D would deface our license plate.

But how not to love the mountains, unknown where I grew up, the food deftly prepared by my grandmother and mother, and the language that resounded throughout our house? Lining our walls were my father's bookcases with all the great German writers beckoning me to be read and treasured. The more I read, the darker the books became, with photos of striped or naked

people forsaken somewhere in a misty field.

I would struggle my entire life with the double-faced head of the German language: the sweet whisperer and the threatening screamer.

My daughter and her husband moved back to the US years after my initial, very hesitant acceptance of a German addition to our family. Indeed, it helps that his name is David, that he studied in the country of my childhood, that he speaks both my languages.

What makes our relationship valuable — and it took me some time to understand — is that David is part of a new generation of Europeans who have faced their past and deserve to be understood. ■

Cordula Hahn is a volunteer at the Hidden Child Foundation.

TWO BROTHERS, TWO DREAMS

By Michel and Simon Jeruchim

THE UNLOCKING

By Michel Jeruchim

My awakening arrived on May 20, 1991. The occasion was the *First International Gathering of Children Hidden during World War II*. It took place at the Marriott Marquis in Times Square. There had been other gatherings of survivors in other places, but this was the very first specifically aimed at hidden children. Why the *first* time, after so many years? Not long after the war, survivor groups began to organize. At that time, survivor implied only someone who had lived through the death camps. Hidden children were not generally considered to have experienced significant trauma, certainly not in comparison to camp survivors. However, hidden children had trauma of their own: separated from parents and family and bewildered by circumstances they could not understand, resulting in lifelong psychological repercussions.

In the immediate post-war years, we hidden children were not telling our stories. What *could* we say, we were *children!* We felt the effect of our trauma in our core, but we didn't have the adult language to express our hurt or the maturity to put it in a context that would have made sense to us. And for many, the actual sequence of events that landed us in hiding places would simply have been unknown. But if a child had actually ached to tell his or her story, would they have trusted the adults to hear it? Hidden children were "invisible," and no one asked for our stories anyway, so we kept these stories locked inside. It took some years before we "children" became adults and were able to speak for ourselves. Mental health professionals, many who had been hidden children themselves, understood that we had endured significant trauma. We could now be identified as a distinct category of survivors. Thus, was born the conference that took place in New York almost half a century after the end of the war. The stories that wanted to be told could now be safely tiptoed out of the locked drawer.

The gathering was buzzing with about sixteen-hundred no longer so-young people like me, and most of them older. People

crowded around a large bulletin board, on which hundreds of index cards were pinned with messages seeking persons from their original neighborhoods, or asking if anyone knew the whereabouts of their brother or sister or other relatives. The air was crackling with energy, as if the pent-up repression of grief for nearly half a century was about to erupt. And it seemed to for most participants.

We were like children impatiently waiting to unwrap a gift, in this case an encounter with our own lost childhoods. The presence of so many who shared a similar history, to whom nothing needed to be explained, with whom this mutuality was understood, produced such a high of well-being that it shattered the natural reticence of hidden children who had now come out of hiding so many years later. I was fifty-four years old and taking baby steps to recover from a trauma inflicted nearly half a century earlier. Even as I write this remembrance many years later, my eyes water involuntarily.

My brother, Simon, and my sister, Alice, attended as well. They were initially resistant, as was I, a typical symptom of our experience. At the time we ourselves did not identify as survivors of the Holocaust. We still reserved that term for people who survived the death camps. It was also probably true that we did not want to open ourselves up to the inexpressible pain of the loss of our parents. Since that time, I have changed my mind about the definition of a survivor. I now think that any Jewish person living in parts of Europe controlled by the Nazis who lived through the war to be a survivor, because it was the Nazis' goal to kill every Jew in Europe. Jews were hunted animals, and once caught were slaughtered. Males were especially vulnerable; a suspicious Nazi could force him to strip, and circumcision was a death card.

Surviving took place in various forms, hiding, false papers, fleeing if possible, and luck. For children, "hiding" took place in different forms. The word often conjures up a literal interpretation: secreted in a cellar, under a trapdoor; in a room sealed off from the outside; in the hayloft of a barn.

Many children were hidden in convents, and many, like me, were hidden in plain sight under a false identity. This is not to suggest that every means of survival was an equivalent experience. Nothing can compare with surviving a death camp. Nevertheless, all Jews were at risk, at any moment.

In the first plenary session of the gathering, set in a large ballroom, Abraham Foxman, the president of the Anti-Defamation League, (who organized the event), himself a survivor from Poland, addressed us. He spoke of the Polish woman who had sheltered him, and his voice quavered with emotion. I found myself sobbing uncontrollably, but quietly. I think this was the first time I had allowed myself to cry for my parents.

After Foxman's speech and some other speakers, we sat down to lunch with Joan, and my brother's wife, Cécile. Cécile was herself a hidden child at a convent in Belgium. At that meal, for the first time in fifty years, Alice, Simon and I spoke about our parents with love, with wistfulness, with humor, and with regret, and we reminisced about our childhood. It was as if a weight had been lifted, and we could speak about our parents as persons with foibles and celebrate their lives, rather than mourn them as numbered victims. All this, of course, was unsaid: I don't know if Alice and Simon registered the moment in that fashion, but I did. At the time of this conference we still had not known our parents' fate in detail. For some years after our arrival in the States, I had fantasized that they would turn up; perhaps they had escaped to Russia, as had happened to some, or perhaps they didn't know where we were. These thoughts were unrealistic, of course, and little by little, I discarded this hope. The facts of my parents' deaths were to be revealed about ten years later, through Simon's tireless research.

I know now that my emotional preparation for this conference took place two years earlier, when Joan and I planned a trip to France. For some time prior, Joan had been quietly lobbying for that trip. She was somewhat insistent that we take

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it, even if I wasn't sure that I was emotionally prepared. We would return to the place where I was hidden in St. Aubin-lès-Elbeuf, about 75 miles northwest of Paris, to find the family who had sheltered me. We engaged the services of Jacques de Larsay, a travel specialist for France, to map out an itinerary that would have been (and was) lovely in itself, with lodgings at picturesque farm houses or small châteaux. One such place was relatively near St. Aubin. My ambivalence was such, however, that prior to landing in Paris, I had actually not yet decided whether or not I would go. Many years after the fact, I am sure that my hesitation to contact them so long after the fact had a component of embarrassment if not shame for not having done so, long before.

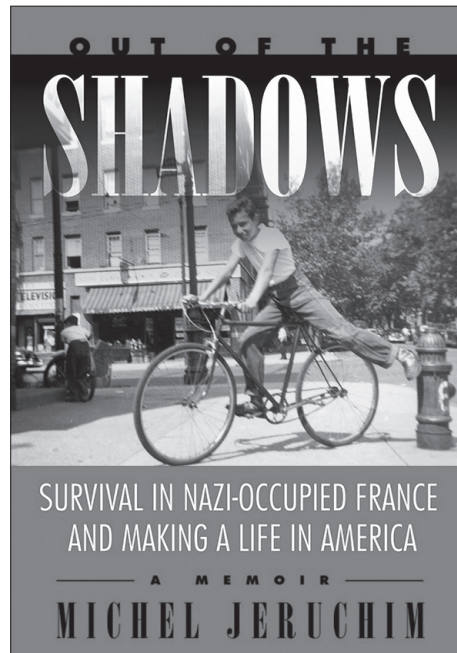
My brother and sister had also spent the war in Normandy. After Normandy had been liberated, we started to write letters to one another. My brother had known from the start where I had been hidden. We kept most of those letters and they are now preserved in the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., to which they were donated. From one of the immediate post-war letters, I discovered that the Leclères were on my mind at least as late as 1948. One such letter from my brother provided me with their address, which I had requested. Did I write to them? I don't remember.

You might ask, why did it take forty-four years to find the Leclères and thank them for protecting me? I was twelve when I left France, and at that age I was only looking forward. I was excited to be in America and I wanted to fit in. France was in the rear-view mirror. Then there was school, and work, and life. Returning to see the Leclères would have taken too much emotional energy. As time passed, it became very clear that I owed them a great deal, if not my life, but by then I had such a sense of awkwardness – how could I explain this long absence to them? But then, with Joan's help, I took the plunge.

We rented a car and planned to pass not too far from St. Aubin, in any case, since our first destination was to be the landing beaches in Normandy. The cemetery and memorial there were deeply moving for me. I had not expected it, but the sight of endless simple crosses and a few scattered Jewish stars brought to mind the sense-

less loss of lives. I cried there, not only for my parents but for all those young men.

After the beaches, we were to head further west to Mont St. Michel, turn south and repair towards Paris along the Loire valley, where we would stop at many of the beautiful castles along *La Vallée des Rois*. Our first stop after leaving the Paris airport was in the town of Saint-Pierre-du-Vauvray. There, in St. Pierre, we checked into *L'hôtellerie St. Pierre*, a very charming inn selected by Jacques, on the banks of the river Seine, where from our window we could see barges lazily drifting past. Somehow, just seeing the



countryside, the river, the fields, triggered a sense of joy, a primitive reconnection to the land I remembered from my childhood. We had dinner at the hotel and then collapsed from the long trip. Refreshed in the morning, I decided that it would be impossible not to take this opportunity to visit the Leclère family. I was also tempted to visit Cailly-sur-Eure, the site of the first orphanage where my siblings and I found ourselves after the war, which was less than thirty minutes away. But it was in the direction opposite St. Aubin. Going there would simply have been a delaying tactic, and I was afraid of losing my "courage" if I delayed my visit. It happens that St. Pierre is across the river from a town called Louviers. The sign to it immediately brought

to mind a song I used to sing as a boy, *Sur la route de Louviers*. As we set out for St. Aubin, I couldn't help mumbling the song to myself:

Sur la route de Louviers (bis), Y avait un cantonnier (bis), Et qui cassait des tas d'cailloux, Pour mettre sur le passage des roues....

It so brightened my spirits that my anxiety almost melted away.

After the fact I realized how unrealistic it was to assume I would know exactly where to find the Leclère house, as if time had stood still since the day in 1945 when I was "reclaimed" by my uncle. It would not have been realistic to expect an eight-year-old to have such pinpoint recall. Yet, I had a mental image that I thought would guide me to the right place. St. Aubin had grown quite a bit from the little village I thought I remembered. Even more, I had not only forgotten the address but the correct spelling of the Leclères' name! After innumerable twists and turns and retraces in our rented car, I was ready to give up. I just couldn't accost someone on the street and ask, "Do you know the Leclère family?" But then, while going around a square, out of the corner of my eye, I spotted a sizable building on one side: It was the *Mairie*, the town hall. I decided it was worth a try to go in and see what the civil servants could do for us.

We entered the reception area and addressed a young lady behind a counter. *Bonjour, Mademoiselle. J'ai vécu ici pendant la guerre, et je me demande si vous pouvez me donner l'adresse d'une famille que je connaissais alors, la famille Leclère*, I said to her.

I explained somewhat vaguely that I had lived in this town during the war and was trying to find the family with whom I had stayed, without giving further detail than their name, which of course sounds the same, whether spelled Leclère or the more common Leclerc, which I had always thought it was. She furrowed her eyebrows for a moment, said that she could not be of help, but there was a certain Madame de Latour in the back office, who had been around a long time and might be of assistance. She went and fetched Madame de Latour, to whom I gave the same information, namely, that I had lived during the war with Marcel and Suzanne Leclère, and

Continued on next page

was trying to find them. Of course, she knew the Leclère family, she said, in fact lived near them. I further learned at that moment that the first name of the man of the family was Léon, although everyone referred to him as Marcel, his second name. She apparently knew the family well, for she knew that Gaston, their son, had recently had heart surgery and was in *retraite*, retirement.

At that moment, I imagined hugging Suzanne and clasping Marcel in a tearful and happy reunion. But before the thought had fully crystallized, Madame de Latour explained that Suzanne and Marcel had passed away some years prior. That reunion was not going to happen. I had half-expected that they might not be alive, but still, I felt really sad.

My mood turned around again when, to my surprise and delight, Mme de Latour said that she was about to take her lunch break and would be happy to guide us to Gaston's house. We accepted and the three of us took off in our rented car. Very soon after, we arrived in front of a small brick house with a white picket fence. At the gate, Madame de Latour said *Attendez ici*, while I go in and tell the occupants of the house that we are here. The protocol in France for "dropping in" is not the same as in the States. The French are much more formal. In this case, however, it was more than formality. She said she did not want to shock Gaston, especially since he had had recent heart surgery. Although I had been circumspect about the exact nature of my connection with the Leclères, I suspect she knew more than I had said and wanted to prevent a double shock.

I watched Mme de Latour emerge from the house along with a portly ruddy-cheeked woman: Micheline, Gaston's wife. She was clearly protective and wanted to make sure I was not an impostor. I told her who I was, and why I was there, and I suppose I gave her enough detail no one else would know, satisfying her that I was the genuine article. She then returned to the house and re-emerged with Gaston.

He shuffled up to the gate and looking me straight in the eye, he said "*Alors, c'est vraiment toi?*" So, is it really you?

I don't think that I ever thought about what kind of reception I would have had at this point. Perhaps there was a hint of reproach, as if he meant "where have you

been all this time." I had only thought of my separation from the Leclères as a loss for me, but I had never thought about the possibility that my departure would have been a loss for them. As I learned later, the Leclères had wanted to adopt me after the war. Had they fallen in love with a little orphan boy? So it would seem.

My unease was quickly put to rest. Gaston smiled and forty-four years melted away. I felt so good, and yet so bad at that moment because I still ached with the realization that I would not ever see Suzanne and Marcel. It may be that, to some extent, I have conflated the Leclères with my parents. I do not remember the immediately ensuing moments, but soon after, Joan and I were ensconced in their house and Micheline couldn't stop fussing. We spent the day with them, eating and bringing one another up-to-date, if one could only remember forty-four years of happenings. Their current house was not the one that I had been sheltered in, but we took a walk to where that was, a small pilgrimage that I should have taken years before. The address of that house had been 88 rue de Tourville (the street was renamed after the war), and I have wondered if it's pure coincidence that the house in Paoli where I lived for nearly 42 years, before moving to Philadelphia, is numbered 88.

During that walk, Gaston took us next door to his parents' neighbor, a sprightly 82-year old Mme Louise Brida. When Gaston told her who I was, she broke out in smiles, hugged and kissed me. Although I had completely forgotten about her, I had apparently spent a lot of time with her and her family – she had had seven children. Because the Leclères worked, she took care of me when I returned from school at which time no one was yet home. She used to give me a *tartine* (a snack) till it was time to go. She invited the three of us in the house and gave us *un petit coup*, a "drop" to drink. The French use any excuse to open a bottle! It was such a happy reunion. I can't say that memories came flooding back, but her joy was so infectious that I almost felt like that schoolboy again.

During one of our conversations, I learned that Marcel had been in the *résistance*, the source of a connection that landed me in the Leclères' home. One

thing that astounded Joan was the stack of letters sent to me by my brother and kept for forty-four years by the Leclères. One might think that they had simply borrowed them somewhere in the house and forgotten about them until we showed up. But that's not the case. First of all, these letters were delivered to the Leclères' original house, and something meaningless would not have been transported to their new one. Gaston knew exactly where they were and proudly showed them to us. I can only conclude that these letters were somehow a link to me that they didn't want to lose.

I have difficulty smiling for cameras. But there is a photograph taken by Joan of Gaston, Micheline, their grandchildren who were there that day (Cécile and Étienne) and me, sitting around the dining room table, with the quintessential companion – a French poodle. My smile is as wide and genuine as has ever been taken of me, for on that day I recovered a piece of myself.

A LIFELINE DURING ADVERSITY

By Simon Jeruchim

I was born in Paris on Christmas day in 1929. Until the massive July 16, 1942, 'Vel d'Hiv' police roundup, my family lived in Montreuil, a Paris suburb. My father, Samuel, my mother, Sonia, my older sister, Alice, my younger brother, Michel, and I miraculously escaped arrest at that time, and with the intervention of compassionate gentiles, my sister, brother and I were hidden separately in Normandy. Eventually our parents were arrested and deported to Auschwitz where they were murdered. At the end of the war my siblings and I were reunited and placed in Jewish orphanages for a few years.

As far back as I can remember I loved to draw and, even at a young age, my dream was to become a professional artist. While hiding on a small farm, I felt isolated and lonely. Art became my lifeline, a reprieve from harsh days. Even though I didn't go to school, I had the good fortune of meeting Monsieur Crochet, the teacher at the elementary school in the village of Savignyle-Vieux. Upon discovering that I loved to draw, he gave me the princely gift of a watercolor set and a drawing pad, art materials that had belonged to his

Continued on next page

uncle who once had dabbled in art. I had never used watercolors before but with excitement and daring I filled the drawing pad with paintings of people and places around the village.

I saved those watercolors for over half a century and eventually donated them to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington DC on the occasion of the exhibit: "Life in Shadows – Hidden Children and the Holocaust." My childhood watercolors are now in the Holocaust Museum's permanent collection.

After the war my siblings and I were sent to a Jewish Home in the village of Cailly sur Eure in Normandy where I had to learn a trade. I was given but two choices, either that of tailor or electrician. I opted for electrician. I had to face the fact that my hopes of becoming an artist would remain but a childhood dream.

Once more fortune smiled upon me. I had already shown my artistic ability in the Home by painting several murals. One, a mural in the dining room, depicted the crossing of the Red Sea. But instead of using a biblical theme, I portrayed Jews driving jeeps, being chased by German soldiers. It was a hit!

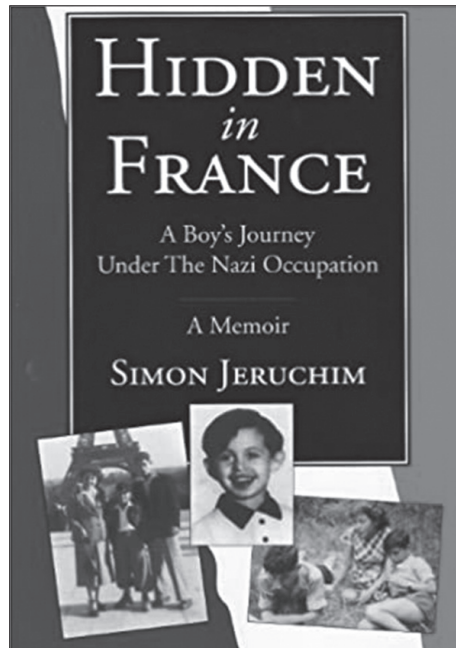
Aware of my talent and imagination, my teacher encouraged me to apply to an art school in Paris, where I was accepted and even received a scholarship. I studied at the School of Applied Arts for three years, and graduated just before immigrating to America.

My siblings and I arrived in New York in October 1949 and went to Brooklyn to live with Sam Shapiro, our maternal uncle and his family. My sister and I had to find some work to help our American family with the added expenses. My sister found a job, but I was not successful. I had almost given up finding work when a friend recommended me to a small advertising agency in Manhattan. I was hired as a messenger with the promise that I would be given a job as a layout man should there be an opening. But months passed with no opening in sight.

During one of my errands, the clerk in one art supply store told me that a French designer was looking for an assistant. The designer, Jean Carlu, was a world-famous poster designer. Once more, luck had come my way. I was hired as his assistant, and worked for him for nearly a year, until I was

drafted in the United States Army in 1951.

I was sent to Korea, assigned to the 5th Regimental Combat Team, and spent most of the next twelve months in combat. But, once more, my passion for drawing came to my rescue – at least, I believe that without it I would not have survived that bloody conflict. Soon after arriving to my unit, as I sketched my buddies and generously gave them drawings of pin-up girls to hang in their bunkers, the word spread around my battalion that a French artist was in their midst. Instead of pulling patrol duty, I was given a job at the Battalion Headquarters



Operations, where I handled maps and artillery liaison. I was still vulnerable to the enemy's artillery and mortar fire, but the odds of surviving had somewhat improved.

Facing danger every day I found a wonderful escape from the grim reality by drawing my buddies and cartoons making fun of daily life in the army. My commanding officer liked my cartoons and sent them to the "Stars & Stripes" army publication, where they frequently appeared in the newspaper's centerfold. My regiment went off the line for a short while, and this gave me the opportunity to create many sketches of Korean people. Incidentally, I donated all those drawings, and they are now in the permanent collection of the Korean War Veterans National Museum and Library in Illinois.

After being discharged from the Army, I took the first job that was offered to me and became a package designer for a manufacturer of paper bags in Queens, New York. I was thrilled to get this job, even if it was not what I had hoped to do. I was still more interested in the graphic arts, but I stuck to this profession and moved on to better jobs. Eventually, I worked as an art director for Revlon, and I became a specialist in cosmetic and fragrance packaging design. I subsequently left Revlon to start my own design firm and for many years I designed cosmetics and award-winning perfume lines for leading U.S. corporations. Still, I had not forgotten my dream to pursue graphic design. Luckily, I fulfilled this aspiration by designing many book jackets and illustrating books for leading publishers.

Drawing and painting have always been a big part of my life. Now that I am retired, I devote even more time to being creative and have been rewarded with many exhibits. More recently, writing also became another aspect of the joy of self-discovery. My inspiration to write resulted from Abraham Foxman's remarks at the 1991 conference of "The Hidden Child" in New York. Abraham Foxman struck a chord in me when he said: "We, the Hidden Children, have an obligation to testify to the events we witnessed during the war." I took his urging to heart and wrote my memoir in 2001.

Against all odds, I have realized my childhood dreams, and more. I was lucky to meet and marry the talented Cecile Rojer, also a Hidden Child, born in Brussels, Belgium. We have two wonderful daughters and six grandchildren. We hope they will not forget to bear witness to the bitter lessons of our past; and may they be able to hold on to their dreams, as I did. ■

Michel Jeruchim's The Unlocking is the first chapter of his newly-published book, "Out of the Shadows: A Memoir, Survival in Nazi-Occupied France and Making a Life in America," Tree of Life Books, 2019, www.outoftheshadowsmemoir.com; Available at Amazon

Simon Jeruchim's memoir is titled "Hidden in France – A Boy's Journey Under the Nazi Occupation," published by Fithian Press, in 2001. This was followed by a sequel, "Frenchy – A Young Jewish-French Immigrant Discovers Love and Art in America – and War in Korea," also published by Fithian Press, in 2005.



WE ARE NOT IN HIDING

By Rabbi Joseph Polak
Av Bet Din of Boston

The Talmud (b. Shabbat 60b) records a rather harrowing tale which may hold some lessons for our own current, coronavirus-centered lives.

The scene, set in the 2nd Century during the Hadrianic persecutions, is of a group of Jews hiding in a cave, huddled together in mortal fear for their lives.

They soon establish two rules:

1) No one may leave the cave, for such a person has no control over being discovered. The Roman military may well be watching, and the cave and its sorry inhabitants could be mortally compromised.

2) Anyone coming to the cave, on the other hand, must be allowed in, on the assumption that she would approach cautiously, concealing her whereabouts and tracks.

Suddenly a great noise is heard near the cave. "It's the Romans."

The Jews panic; they burst out of the cave, fleeing for their lives, and in their rush to escape, many are trampled to death.

It wasn't the Romans.

Many lessons await us in this tragic vignette:

1) Leaving your roost too early, before the virus has run its course, doesn't just imperil you with the chance of contracting the virus, it imperils everybody else.

2) Irrational behavior, immature, impulsive actions (like socializing in bars, beaches, shuls...) while the coronavirus still hovers, can be deadly not just for you, but for everyone.

3) We cannot turn down those who need our help, but we have to do so in a way that doesn't compromise either our own safety or that of the rest of society. This message strikes me as especially important for first-responders, but is true for all of us.

4) There are no soloists during a pandemic. Everything everyone does — all of our behavior — affects everyone else. Therefore,

5) when we live our lives thoughtlessly, with little regard for the suffering of others, whether their pain be from economic hardship or illness, from loneliness or isolation, or from the constant loss of loved ones to the illness, we bring down

all of society. In the Talmudic story, the Jews forgot that their hasty stampede would impact others, thus making the loss of life and destruction inevitable.

So, one of the great positive teachings about our Coronavirus times is that there is not an act, not a behavior that we engage in during this pandemic that does not hold within itself the possibility of benefitting other human beings. This lies at the core of all Jewish ethical teaching. When we recuse at home, for example, we are not merely protecting ourselves, we are protecting everyone. Even if we are not carriers, we are modeling behavior for carriers — we are able to restrain ourselves so that people will not congregate socially and spread the dreaded disease.

Certainly, this is very different from hiding during the Holocaust, where terror stalked at every moment, and around each corner; where a hiding place could be betrayed for \$10, and where — however valid and critical — the only lives we could protect somewhat were our own.

And perhaps most significantly, we are not alone during the pandemic. We are not in hiding; we are in seclusion.

The whole world, every country, every city, has stopped all activity; unlike during the Holocaust, everyone is trying to do what is right — not just to save themselves, but to flatten the curve, to protect all of human civilization. ■

Rabbi Joseph Polak is a Child Survivor of Westerbork and Bergen-Belsen. His book, After the Holocaust the Bells Still Ring, received the National Jewish Book Award. In this memoir, Rabbi Polak wrote about his family's deportation from the Netherlands to the Nazi concentration camp at Westerbork and about the difficulties of living with traumatic early childhood memories. He is an Associate Professor of Health Law, Ethics & Human Rights at Boston University School of Public Health, and rabbi emeritus of the Hillel House at Boston University. Rabbi Polak also serves as Chief Justice of the Rabbinical Court of Massachusetts. His story as an infant survivor appeared in the 2016 issue of our

ISOLATION: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE OF CATASTROPHE

By Dr. Robert Krell

Crisis, catastrophe, panic: words that come to mind in the midst of the global assault by an uncontrollable virus. Personal isolation and a rupture of social contacts is just one important response required to defeat this silent threat. Not since World War II, 75 years ago, has there been an event affecting nearly all nations at one and the same time. War's conclusion in 1945 led to an outpouring of revulsion upon the revelation of what had transpired not only with respect to the horrors of war itself but also the Nazi war within the war, visited upon the largely helpless Jews of Europe.

A new vocabulary emerged from the ashes, the language of atrocity. Over time, concentration camps (hardly an original term) came to have new meaning, and worse, extermination camps. The world came to know "the final solution," eventually encompassed in the words "Holocaust" in English, and "Shoah" in Hebrew. The concept of "genocide" entered awareness. Some consequences were the founding of the United Nations, Nazi War Crimes Tribunals, and the Genocide Convention.

The reverberations of the gratuitous, brutal slaughter of innocents are with us still. It was humanity at its peak of inhumanity. No Jewish baby, elderly man or woman, expectant mother was spared. All Jews were condemned to die — even Einstein or Freud had they been caught.

While my wife and I were in quarantine for 14 days (and continue in self-isolation), a friend asked what it was like for me to be confined to home. She knew my background. A good question, for I was confined to "home" for nearly 3 years with a Christian family in The Hague, Holland, from 1942 to 1945. As a Jewish baby, I was meant to die. Of 108,000 Dutch Jews deported primarily to Auschwitz and Sobibor, about 5,000 returned. And of over 20,000 Jewish children hiding throughout the Netherlands, over half were betrayed, as was Anne Frank and her family.

During my period of hiding, aged 2-5, I



Dr. Robert Krell addresses the United Nations on January 27, 2012, for Holocaust Remembrance Day.

do not recall complaining, reporting illnesses, and I did not cry. And 75 years later I do not complain, ignore illness (at my peril), and cry only where I cannot be seen. The first time I cried was in protest of having to go to bed when others were out in the street celebrating the end of the war.

There was also hunger. All of Holland was starving in the "hunger winter" of 1944-45. I can still recapture the mealy taste of tulip bulbs, but I do not recall the taste of rabbits, occasionally brought home, slaughtered and skinned by my Vader.

Confinement now is vastly different. Being pursued by the Coronavirus is not personal. And we are housebound in comfortable surroundings with a stocked fridge (so far) and televisions that work (so far). But my imagination runs wild. What if there is no electricity? What if we could not reach our children and grandchildren? What if we fall ill for any reason and must go to the hospital as one of the "vulnerable elderly"? But forced into social isolation, this is definitely an improvement.

There is another psychological complication. Having first suffered the separation

from my parents with whom I was miraculously re-united, I therefore experienced a second separation from the family I had come to think of as mine. I had become "Robbie Munnik."

Some of my anxieties were alleviated by the postwar friendship between the Munniks and the Krells. But my heart bleeds for children who for any variety of reasons, are in situations that remind me of forced separations. As a doctor who specialized in child and family psychiatry, it is particularly painful to witness the virus separating families of first responders, many of whom must leave home to be close to their vital work. And adults, who have aging parents, are unable to visit and/or care for them. These are painful times for so many.

The enormous psychological pressures and psychiatric consequences of being in the trenches has not been seen in such massive numbers for generations. And while so many of us must hunker down, so many millions remain at work delivering mail and food, newspapers and special services of all kinds.

As a retired physician, I can still feel the inner engine running as if I were the 25-year-old intern at the emergency room of the Philadelphia General Hospital. We young doctors felt invincible, or were just too naive to grasp the potential dangers of infections and violence. We worked in a danger zone, with police close by. There were 90 interns and 270 residents training in this large ghetto-based hospital, and our patients coughed and bled all over us. Yet, I recall no serious illnesses amongst my colleagues.

Now approaching 80, I "suddenly" belong to the most vulnerable group, the elderly with preconditions who cannot withstand a Coronavirus infection. So, despite my inner desire, I must sit this one out. Here's hoping it will be brief.

As I reflect on survival, we children of the Holocaust (1.5 million were murdered), we who are so few carried with us the hope that

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ISOLATION: A PERSONAL PERSPECTIVE OF CATASTROPHE

we would leave a better world than the one we endured. But instead, we have witnessed a spate of genocides in all corners of the globe, the resurgence of anti-Semitism on a massive scale, and an ominous breakdown of conventionally moral and kind behavior. The virus has forced us to know what is happening to our neighbors in cities, provinces, states and nations. And news reports with statistics and images are flowing into our lives, raising both awareness and anxiety.

Is it too much to hope that we will learn from what we see? Is this the catastrophe that will inform the three generations who have largely escaped massive tragedies? Will journalists and reporters impress upon us all what might be a probable response to this tragedy? I like to think that had there been daily press coverage on what was known, even thought, about the brutality of Auschwitz, that it might not have

been able to function so efficiently.

Holocaust Education aims to derive lessons that inform us how to do better. One such lesson concerns the degree to which so many, otherwise good people, stood by and did nothing. Almost every survivor can point to one small act by a non-Jewish person that inspired a spark of hope and provided strength to go on. So, in this time of catastrophe, wrought by nature rather than people, such acts can also inspire those who fall ill and those who treat them.

Many have responded heroically. But all too many behave as if they are immune. They are not, nor are their families. These by-standers do not consider the effects of their behavior on the health of others, nor do they pose the question, "Is there something more that I can do?" This moment in time demands a constructive response to that question. ■

Dr. Robert Krell is a Professor Emeritus of Psychiatry at the University of British

Columbia in Vancouver, Canada. He is devoted to understanding the problems of Holocaust survivor-families and supporting their well-being. Born in The Netherlands in August 1940, he survived the war hiding with the Munnik family. He earned his medical degree from The University of British Columbia and completed his psychiatric training at Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia and Stanford University Medical Center in Palo Alto, California. In his private practice, Dr. Krell treated Holocaust survivors and their families. He has published several books, among them And Life Is Changed Forever: Holocaust Childhoods Remembered with Martin Glassner, Medical and Psychological Effects of Concentration Camps on Holocaust Survivors, co-edited with Marc I. Sherman, and The Children of Buchenwald with Judith Hemmendinger. Dr. Krell's interests remain in the psychiatric treatment of aging survivors of massive trauma and participating in programs against racism and prejudice.

WORLD FEDERATION CONFERENCE POSTPONED TO 2021

The World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust and Descendants (WFJCSH&D) has postponed its **32nd Annual Conference** in St. Louis, MO, until the Fall of 2021.

The Kindertransport Association (KTA) will join the conference once again, as will members of **Generations of the Shoah International (GSI).**

The conference will be held at the St. Louis Marriott Grand Hotel.

More details and information on registration will be made available as soon as possible.

Watch for updates at www.holocaustchild.org.



Vancouver 2019, the most recent World Federation Conference.