

Holocaust Remembered

Stolen Treasures



“The Good, The Bad, The Ugly” and The Beauty of Art

The human race must not want to learn from the past. We seem to ignore the advice of those that understand the malignancy of totalitarian power. As I write this article today, I am distracted by the news reports, video shots, and interviews of Ukrainians as a result of the Russian “invasion” otherwise known as an “unprovoked war”. Hearing about the bombing that almost hit the Historical landmark of Babyn Yar screams of yet another insult to those victims of the Holocaust. It is almost obscene to be in my



LILLY FILLER

comfortable heated home watching Ukrainians flee the conflict, in the harsh winter of Europe, to Poland and other countries east of Ukraine to protect their children and their own lives. It is surreal, and so reminiscent of the actions of immigrants during the Holocaust — except, then there were no videos or visual news reports saturating the world. This time we cannot say “we didn’t know”! This time the world is watching and listening! We are accountable! We are absorbing this on social media.

The Good ...

Jews are not wrong in perceiving that there is now more antisemitism than ever before. The ADL reports a 62% rise in

overt antisemitism in America. There is the staggering statistic that 60% of all reported religious hate crimes are against Jews. It seems that the belief in conspiracy theories that fuel antisemitism is alive and hatred, bigotry, and intolerance is omnipresent. It is amplified by social media. **The Bad ...**

It is against this backdrop that I present “Stolen Treasures,” the many stories of theft and greed. With antisemitism, there is a strong desire to take or own possessions of Jews, such as their homes, their professions and their arts and treasures. Hitler created his own systematic art looting organization called The Third Reich’s Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg (ERR). To this day, the vast amount of confiscated family and personal treasures is not known completely. The Nazis hid the arts underground or in caves, in warehouses or railroad stations, and in their own homes. Although it has been over 80 years since the pillaging, most stolen pieces are still not with their rightful owners. **The Ugly ...**

This edition features the stories and the significance of this massive theft. One of my personal favorite recollections is the life of Rose Valland, a fearless French



Rose Valland



Gustav Klimt, *The Lady in Gold (Portrait of Adele Bloch-Bauer I)*, 1907

art connoisseur and historian. Because of her position as Museum Curator of Jeu de Paume Museum and her linguistic abilities, she was able to “overhear” the Nazis discuss the fate of many famous art pieces and later helped to locate them. Another fascinating story is about the art piece *The Lady in Gold* by Gustav Klimt which was shown in a 2015 film. It was based on the true story of Maria Altmann, a Jewish woman who took her fight for the art recovery to the US Supreme Court. She ultimately won a multiple year battle against the Austrian government to regain ownership of this painting of her Aunt Adele Bloch-Bauer. The painting was stolen by the Nazis in 1941 from her aunt’s home. After the war, it was recovered in an Austrian Museum,

Galerie Belvedere. The painting was brought to the US and ultimately sold to Ron Lauder for \$135 million to display in his museum, Neue Galerie New York. **The Beauty ...**

I wish to thank all of the families that were willing to tell their personal Holocaust stories and the esteemed contributors who researched the stories for Stolen Treasures. It is a theme that is not familiar to many people. Slowly some items are being found, identified and rightfully delivered to their Jewish owners and their descendants but most of the art will probably never find their original homes. As discussed by contributor Dr. Wesley Fisher, perhaps the European Governments which now hold these arts can share them through a traveling museum.

The SC Council on the Holocaust is now the sponsor of this publication, Holocaust Remembered. The Council is proud to see this edition available throughout the state. The three major publishers, Post & Courier, McClatchy, and Gannett have worked seamlessly with us to ensure that this educational piece is available to all South Carolinians. We welcome you to contact the Council at education@scholocaustcouncil.org to share your story of the Holocaust for our 2023 edition. ■

Lilly Filler is the Chair of the South Council on the Holocaust, editor of Holocaust Remembered and daughter of Holocaust survivors.

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ON THE COVER

Top: An underground Nazi storage facility in Osówka, Poland. Bottom left: Hermann Goering and Adolph Hitler examine a painting at what is probably the exhibit Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art). Bottom right: Goering’s art collection, stolen from museums across Europe, being catalogued in 1945.

What is the Holocaust?

As defined in 1979 by President Jimmy Carter’s Commission on the Holocaust:

“The Holocaust was the systematic bureaucratic annihilation of 6 million Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators as a central act of state during the Second World War. It was a crime unique in the annals of human history, different not only in the quantity of violence—the sheer numbers killed—but in its manner and purpose as a mass criminal enterprise organized by the state against defenseless civilian populations. The decision to kill every Jew everywhere in Europe: the definition of Jew as target for death transcended all boundaries ...

The concept of annihilation of an entire people, as distinguished from their subjugation, was unprecedented; never before in human history had genocide

been an all-pervasive government policy unaffected by territorial or economic advantage and unchecked by moral or religious constraints ...

The Holocaust was not simply a throwback to medieval torture or archaic barbarism, but a thoroughly modern expression of bureaucratic organization, industrial management, scientific achievement, and technological sophistication. The entire apparatus of the German bureaucracy was marshalled in the service of the extermination process ...

The Holocaust stands as a tragedy for Europe, for Western Civilization, and for all the world. We must remember the facts of the Holocaust, and work to understand these facts.”

This is the ninth edition of *Holocaust Remembered* (online at free-times.com/holocaust) which is sponsored by the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust (SCCH), scholocaustcouncil.org.

SCCH is committed to providing factual information to the community, to teachers, and to students. This annual *Holocaust Remembered* supplement is printed and distributed

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If you or your family have a personal story of the Holocaust, please consider sharing it with SCCH. Email education@scholocaustcouncil.org.

We welcome your comments.

Israel's Violins of Hope Speak for Those Who Perished and Those Who Survived The Holocaust

In death camps similar to Auschwitz, music drifted into the air mixing with ashes floating out of the crematorium smokestacks. The executioners forced Jewish violinists to serenade their families and friends to death. The violins, beloved in Jewish culture, sounded the last notes ever heard by those murdered while the musicians touched the strings in agony. Now, local musicians will bring violin melodies to life again to remember those who perished and those who survived.

In a four-week concert tour across South Carolina audiences will sit spellbound as local musicians play the Israeli-restored violins. One concert takes place on April 28

at North Charleston Performing Arts Center on Holocaust Remembrance Day. The concerts will convey Holocaust remembrances and commemorate Bulgaria's rescue of its 49,000 Jewish citizens from train transport to the Nazi death

camps in 1943. Violins of Hope and Varna International-with hundreds of performances in Europe, Israel and the USA including The Kennedy and The Lincoln Centers-will perform together. Their goals are to educate, inspire, and unite audiences through the power of music to renew the rallying cry "Never Again."

Violins of Hope and Varna International reflect the remarkable personal stories of their creators. Kalin and Sharon Tchonev, Varna International's husband-and-wife team met in Columbia, South Carolina, after moving there. Kalin, born in Varna, Bulgaria was



ARLENE BRIDGES SAMUELS



Varna International "Songs of Life" concert at The Kennedy Center.

educated as a concert pianist and conductor and after moving earned music degrees at the University of South Carolina. Sharon, born and growing up in Israel, completed her Israel Defense Forces service, and then a law degree in South Africa. In 1999, Kalin and Sharon formed their organization which specializes in large choral-orchestral concerts, performance tours, and music training academies.

However, the couple's special bond begins in World War II with a heroic little-known story. In 1943, a few Bulgarian politicians and religious leaders learned about a secret Nazi plan. They immediately mobilized the population to prevent the Nazis from herding their Jewish citizens onto waiting trains destined for Hitler's death camps. They saved their 49,000 Jewish citizens, engraving their names in the book of life with Bulgaria deemed as Europe's largest rescue operation.

Two of the 49,000 rescued included Sharon's maternal grandparents who made

Aliyah to Israel five years after WW II ended. Kalin touchingly observes, "I am deeply connected to the rescue as my wife is a descendant of Bulgarian Jews. I am forever thankful to God and the Bulgarian people for rescuing all 49,000 Bulgarian Jews during the Holocaust. Had it not been for this amazing rescue, I would not have my wife and son today." The Tchonev's "Songs of Life" musical production about the rescue includes a commissioned oratorio, "A Melancholy Beauty" by famous Bulgarian composer G. Andreev.

However, Amnon Weinstein, the founder of Violins of Hope, faced an inconceivable tragedy. Four hundred of his relatives perished during the Holocaust. He survived the Polish genocide because his parents made Aliyah in 1935 to pre-state Israel where he was born. Amnon's father Moshe, a violinist and luthier worked with the Palestine Orchestra later called the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. In his Tel Aviv workshop, after World War II Moshe unexpectedly collected violins from Holocaust survivors — or relatives of those who perished. Neither Moshe nor those who entered his shop could bear the grief. Thus, for years the violins collected in a corner of his workshop.

After Amnon took over his father's business and mentored his son Avshi, he experienced a shock one day when he decided to open one of the violin cases. He saw ashes inside. He closed the case never wanting to touch another rescued violin. Years later, Amnon finally gained the will to restore the orphaned violins and founded Violins of Hope in 1996. Amnon and Avshi have restored sixty or more violins to make them sing again in concerts that have won

international praise. Amnon, one of the world's foremost luthiers, has also attained widespread acclaim. Avshi will accompany the violins to South Carolina and speak in educational fora.

The volunteer Board and Advisory Committee composed of Christians and Jews have dedicated themselves to making sure the violinists who played their instruments while trapped in hell on earth will be remembered along with the story of Bulgaria's citizens as examples of unmatched heroism.



Violins were collected in Israel from Holocaust survivors and their relatives and restored many years later by founder Amnon Weinstein (right) and his son Avshi in their Tel Aviv workshop.

Amnon Weinstein's perspective is a profound reminder: "Our violins represent the victory of the human spirit over evil and hatred." Sharon Tchonev observes, "Our 'Songs of Life' production champions bravery in the face of prejudice, a blueprint from Bulgarians who protected their Jewish neighbors like my grandparents."

A dark chapter of antisemitism is resurfacing, hostile to the worldwide Jewish community and the Jewish state. However, in peaceful boldness, musical splendor, and true stories Varna International and Violins of Hope will inspire and educate audiences to befriend and stand by Jewish communities everywhere. ■

Arlene Bridges Samuels is a columnist for the Christian Broadcasting Network/Israel, a guest columnist for All Israel News, and a member of Violins of Hope South Carolina's volunteer board.



Violins of Hope features Bulgarian performers and commemorates Bulgaria's rescue of 49,000 Jewish citizens from Nazi trains in 1943.



April 24: Myrtle Beach May 4: Greenville
April 28: N. Charleston May 8: Columbia

Tickets available at ViolinsofHopeSC.org

The Cultural Plunder by the Nazis

Over the centuries, middle- and upper-middle class Jews assimilated into the mores and customs of the countries in which they lived. They collected art which went far beyond the strict confines of Jewish-themed works. Wealthy Jews had a predilection for Old Master paintings and Christian objects



MARC MASUROVSKY

while many Jewish art dealers and collectors favored 19th and 20th century works and promoted modernist creative expression. These dealers and collectors also acquired antiquities from around the world, decorative objects

from remote regions, period furniture, textiles, indigenous artifacts, rare books, incunabula, and carefully-designed bejew-

eled objects. Middle- and upper middle-income Jews across Europe amassed valuable collections which meant that their cultural assets became a privileged target of Nazi-ordered seizures. In a way, Nazi art looting, in the context of anti-Jewish persecution, embodied a rejection of the success, taste and worldliness of their victims, even if the Nazis shared with their victims similar esthetic preferences. These similarities brought together professionally and socially Jewish dealers and collectors with their non-Jewish clients and associates, many of whom threw their lot with the Nazis and partook in the events of the Holocaust.

When the Nationalist Socialists came to power in Germany in January 1933, they launched a radical overhaul of Germany's cultural landscape designed to uproot artistic movements and modes of expression that they felt contradicted and violated

the tenets of National Socialism and stood in the way of establishing a new Germanic and Aryan culture. By taking aim at all representatives of a certain idea of modernism in the art world and its proponents in academic, literary and museum circles, the Nazis engaged in a wholesale purge of German culture and art.

Cultural plunder encompasses the varied ways in which the Nazis dispossessed their Jewish victims by forcibly expropriating their property, seizing their businesses, transferring their assets into non-Jewish hands through a process known as "Aryanization" and depriving them of their livelihood. The Nazis subjected Jews to a daily regimen of persecution, exemplified by beatings, physical threats, psychological intimidation, arbitrary arrests and internment, which, over time, reduced their ability to function in civil society, restricting their movements in public, making life

untenable for the vast majority of Jews left unprotected at the mercy of the population.

A perpetual state of duress cast a pall on every decision that a Jew made in Nazi Germany, driven by a desperate need to survive and to escape to a foreign haven where they could resume a semblance of a "normal life." Nazi policies and initiatives deprived most Jews of a regular income. In order to survive, Jews were forced to sell off their belongings, including works and objects of art, at whatever price they could obtain either through private sales or auctions. Oftentimes, the prices fell far short of the actual market value of their property. These forced sales resulted from daily acts of duress. The funds accrued at these forced sales were transferred to the Nazi authorities as payment for exit fees and exorbitant taxes levied on Jewish assets.

Art dealers abetted the Nazi-sponsored expropriations of Jewish cultural assets. In many instances, they approached their Jewish clients and made it clear that they had no choice but to sell them their property at whatever price they offered as in the case of Lilly Cassirer Neubauer who was forced to sell a painting by Camille Pissarro in 1939 to Munich art dealer Jakob Scheidwimmer. The painting is now at the Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza in Madrid (Spain) and the subject of a major international legal claim for its restitution. Jewish art dealers like Max Stern of Düsseldorf received official notifications from Nazi authorities to liquidate their stock and shutter their businesses. Auction houses like Lempertz in Köln were involved in the reselling of liquidated and expropriated Jewish-owned works and objects of art. Some of the looted art sold at these auctions ended up decades later in private and public collections in Europe and America. Victims' families and independent researchers have been uncovering them over the past decades, resulting in a number of restitution claims.

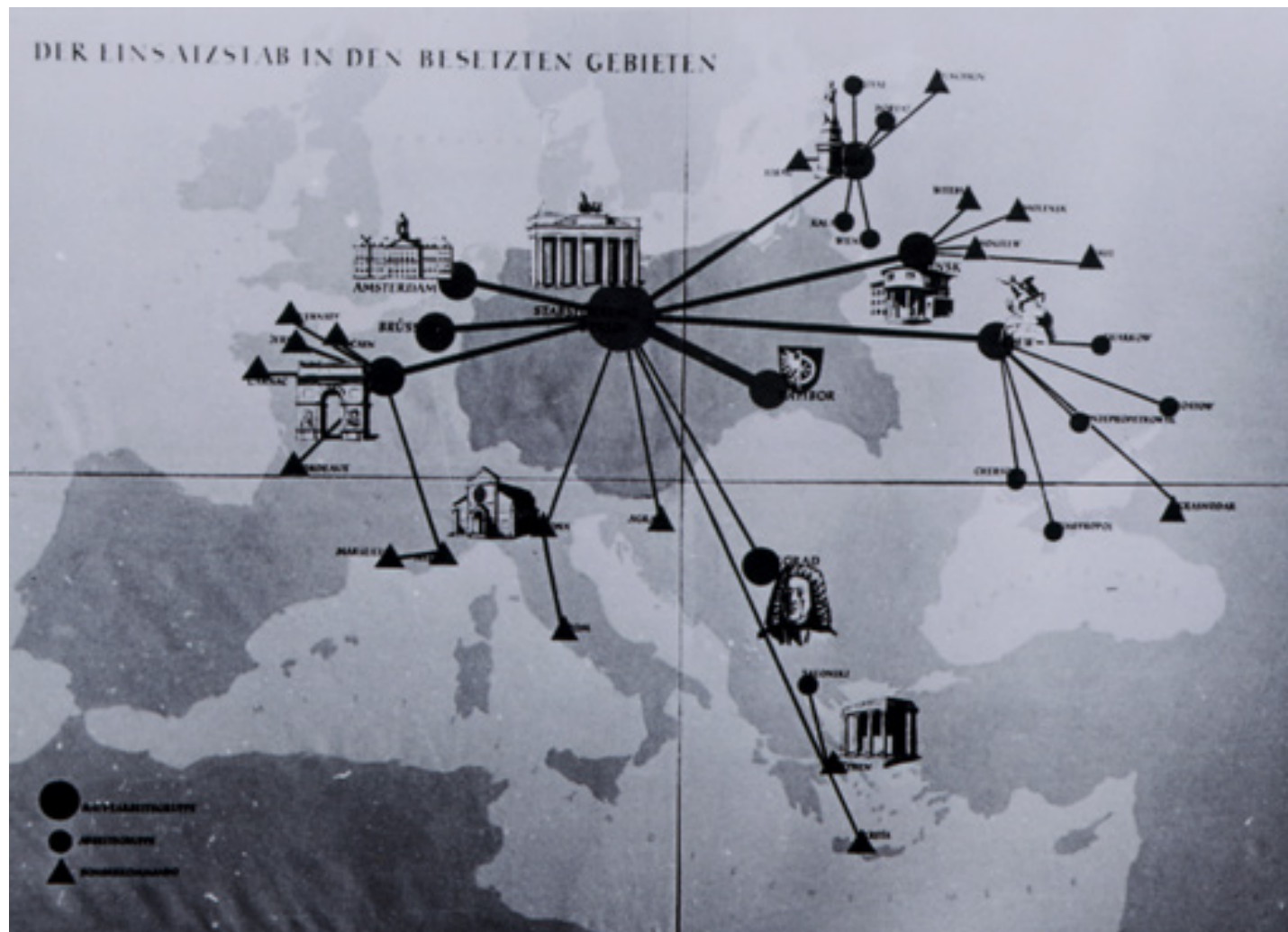
The plunder of Jewish victims' property unfolded alongside the extermination campaign waged by the Nazis against the Jews of Europe. It extended from Norway to Odessa and the Baltic States — engulfing most of Europe except for the so-called "neutral countries" (Sweden, Switzerland, Spain, Portugal) which profited from doing



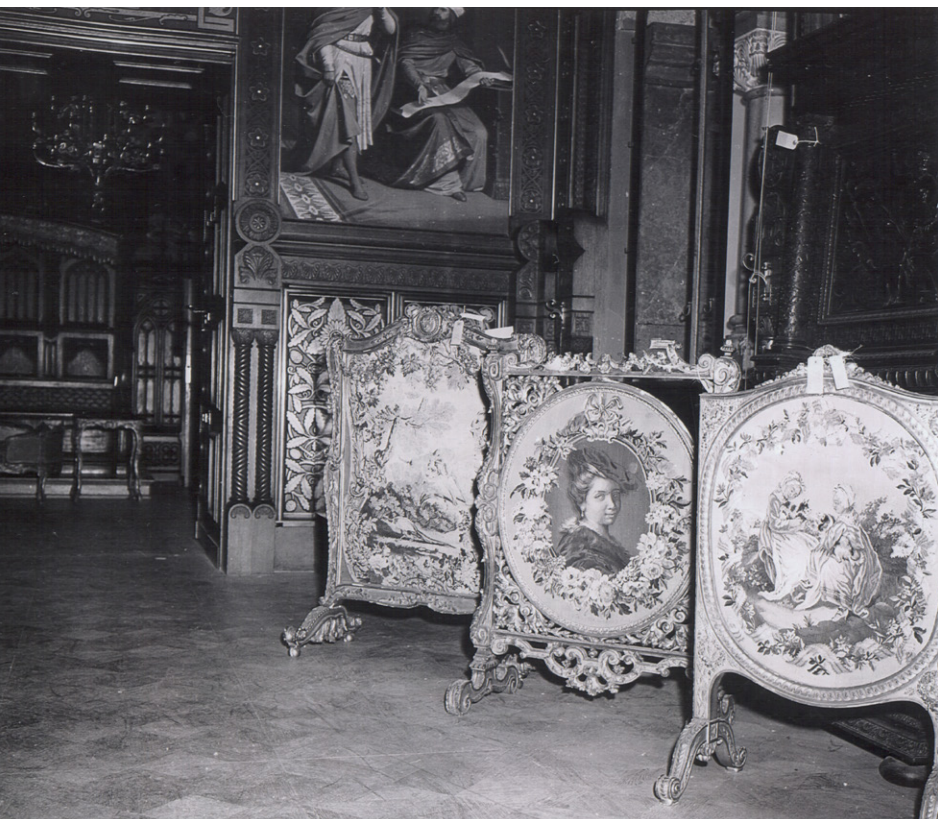
The Oriental Antiquities room of the Louvre Museum serves as a storage space for looted works of art. France, 1943-1944.

business with both the Allied powers and the Axis. Europe's transportation infrastructure — rivers, roads, railroads — provided the logistical grid for transporting looted goods from one part of Europe to the other, and deporting millions of Jews to their deaths.

Seizures of Jewish cultural assets became the staple of Nazi plunder in the territories that they invaded and occupied from 1939 to 1945. Although there were forced sales recorded in them, the main weapon of expropriation was the physical seizure of the contents of Jewish residences. In Western Europe, hundreds of thousands of objects, some more valuable than others, were swept up in this manner during *Möbel-Aktion*, the operational framework from 1942 to 1944 for the wholesale emptying of Jewish-owned residences across Western Europe. Specialized Nazi agencies like the *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR) processed and dispersed the choice pieces retrieved from Jewish abodes. The ERR was established in 1939 for the sole purpose of designing and implementing the Nazi campaign of plunder and expropriation of Jewish-



A map created by the Nazi agency *Einsatzstab Reichsleiter Rosenberg* (ERR) showing where they operated processing and disbursing artwork and other valuable objects stolen from Jewish homes across Western Europe.



Furniture looted in German-occupied France stored at an ERR depot at Neuschwanstein Castle, Bavaria ca. 1943-1944.

owned or controlled cultural assets across Nazi-occupied Europe. Years later, many of the objects looted during *Möbel-Aktion* cannot be matched with their original owners because, in many instances, the Nazis did not document where and from whom they looted these objects. This lack of supporting documentation was mostly a feature of Nazi plunder in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, because, in part, the physical extermination of the Jews was the primary focus of Nazi racial and expansionist policy in the East. Very few Nazi officials operating in the East paid close attention to the provenance of the cultural assets that they looted, except for the personnel of the ERR and its agents.

The Third Reich committed cultural genocide on top of the physical genocide of six million Jews. The Nazis exterminated tens of thousands of Jewish intellectuals, artists, and thinkers who had made significant contributions to their communities and nations and to European culture. Their disappearance forever altered the

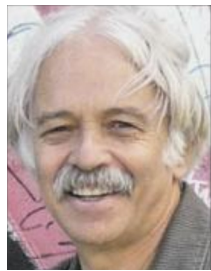
landscape of cultural production in Europe. The inability of the international community to cope with the magnitude of Nazi-sponsored cultural plunder and looting has led to an egregious miscarriage of justice. The disappearance of thousands of Jewish artists and performers during the Nazi era reshaped the post-1945 configuration of the international art market and the culture of formerly occupied nations. This irreplaceable loss of creative talent provoked the decline of artistic currents favored and embraced by interwar Jewish artists. In the immediate postwar years, non-Jewish artists filled this creative vacuum. Who knows what the international art market would have looked like after 1945 if many more Jewish artists had survived Nazi persecution and the Holocaust? Some of the Jewish artists who did survive Nazi persecutions experienced a profound and irreversible change in style and vision and they rarely returned to their modernist explorations of pre-Nazi times. ■

Marc Masurovsky is a historian, co-founder of the Holocaust Art Restitution Project (HARP).

The Last Prisoners of War

The last prisoners of war could soon be coming home. Many works of art looted from Jews of Nazi-occupied Europe that have yet to be recovered by their rightful owners, each with its unique story, may be redeemable in a new restitution paradigm arising in prominent galleries worldwide. Driven by activists in Germany and The Netherlands, museum collectors, curators, and preservationists, are making public their new imperative: to redress injustice. It may seem like slim compensation for direct or distant loved ones, but the admission that every act of theft led to suffering and death would set the record straight and be a precedent in other negotiations.

The new paradigm does away with statutes of limitation. It defends the individual's



THEODORE ROSENGARTEN

right to ownership over the desires and rationalizations of renowned museums which defend their collections come what may. The die was cast a year ago in a stunning reversal of a policy that had tried to balance an institution's innocence

and ignorance of an object's origins with the degree of coercion that led a previous owner to sell it or give it away. In February 2021, the German Advisory Commission on the return of Nazi-era cultural property recommended the restitution of the watercolor *Crouching Female Nude* by Austrian figurative painter Egon Schiele, a protégé of Gustav Klimt. Once owned by Viennese dentist and collector Heinrich Rieger, the figurative work was held by the city of Cologne which contended that it had been voluntarily sold or gifted by Dr. Rieger prior to the Anschluss of March 1938, which gave Hitler the prize of Austria through peaceful annexation. But Cologne could not produce evidence to support its claim. Rieger and his wife were murdered at Theresienstadt in 1942.

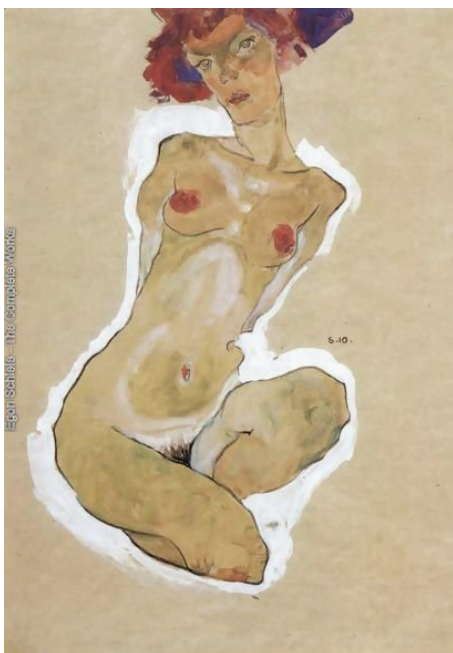
Not long after deciding for Rieger's heirs, the advisory committee continued its pivot to the side of the victim in a case brought with the hope of "encouraging other parties and countries to come forward." Jewish collector Kurt Grawi purchased Franz Marc's Expressionist painting, *Die Fuchses (The Foxes)* in 1928. Grawi's properties were seized by the Nazi government in 1935, though he managed



Franz Marc, *Die Fuchses (The Foxes)*

to smuggle Marc's work to Paris. In 1938, following the Kristallnacht pogrom, he was imprisoned at Sachsenhausen concentration camp. Released early in 1939, he fled Germany to Chile, covering the cost of emigrating by having the painting shipped to New York and sold for a fraction of its worth. Over the next twenty years it changed hands several times, and in 1962 *The Foxes* was donated by the owner of a chain of German department stores to the Dusseldorf City Art Collection.

In 2015, Grawi's heirs appealed to the city for the art work's restitution and were turned down. Yet last May, the Advisory Commission



Egon Schiele, *Crouching Female Nude*
Courtesy egon-schiele.net



A U.S. soldier examines a piece of art in a room full of Nazi-looted items.

Restitution—of silver kiddish cups, medieval haggadot, drawings by Old Masters, portraits of 16th century Jewish merchants, landscapes of Russian steppes—meant “more than just the return of an item of cultural value” but a process that should be “experienced as contributing to the restoration of rights.”

reversed itself and recommended that the painting be restored to the heirs. What made the case unusual was that the sale of the painting had taken place beyond the Third Reich and the Commission took the bold step of projecting its non-binding jurisdiction “outside the Nazi sphere of influence.” The sale, it concluded, was “so closely connected with National Socialist persecution that the location of the event becomes secondary in comparison.” The city agreed and aligned itself with the recommendation and the reasoning behind it. The decision to return the painting recognized Grawi's suffering under the Nazis, placing the owner's experience first. It redefined what it means to sell under duress and rejected the museum's appeal couched in the language of civic pride, that since “entering the city's art collection in 1962,” the painting “had pride of place at the Dusseldorf Kunstpalast.”

Simultaneously, in neighboring Holland, Minister of Culture Ingrid van Engelshoven set out a new restitution policy, repudiating the notion that “the good faith of the acquiring institution” be taken into account. In place of the contentious “balance of interests test,” she called for “an assessment framework ... [where] there is the presumption of involuntary loss.” The hearing must “strive for completeness” by making applicants feel they are being heard. The mayor of Amsterdam

weighed in, declaring that “as a city we have a role and responsibility in this.” Restitution—of silver kiddish cups, medieval haggadot, drawings by Old Masters, portraits of 16th century Jewish merchants, landscapes of Russian steppes—meant “more than just the return of an item of cultural value” but a process that should be “experienced as contributing to the restoration of rights.”

How will the new paradigm play in the United States? In Detroit and Philly, New York and LA, Norman, Oklahoma and Toledo, Ohio, and other cities, where museums are hard-pressed financially and fighting to hold onto assets that were somebody's looted property, heirs are contesting ownership and threatening to sue. Here is one thing we can say: the movement to restore plundered art to its Jewish owners has inspired restitution campaigns throughout the former colonial world. Colonialism and Nazism are blood brothers, forged in the cauldron of racial ideology. The de-nazification of art masterpieces, ritual objects, and antiquities links the Jewish people to an ethos of liberation, a spiritual legacy as necessary to survival as food and air. ■

Theodore Rosengarten is the Zucker/ Goldberg Chair Emeritus in Holocaust Studies, College of Charleston.

Our True Holocaust Inheritance

Of course, there were photographs, just a few, windows to the past. The family next door had oval miniatures and large portraits of ancestors, horsehair couches, and Eastlake settees. Our furniture was brand new, with price tags still attached.

Our photos were not displayed but buried deep in drawers. The day my mother was buried in 1990, we found one hidden near her desk, which she might have secretly looked at. An image of herself, maybe twelve, her younger sister and brother and parents, staring not so much into the camera as into a future they alone could see.



HARLAN GREENE

Regina Kawer, my mother, not much for jewelry, nevertheless always wore an amethyst necklace. Only after her death, when her sister, Maria, the only other surviving member of the family, requested it, did we realize it had been their mother's. When my aunt Maria died (her real name was Edith, but she kept the name she passed under), the necklace was lost since she had not told her children either of its family past. It was a past neither she nor my mother could speak of, but which they literally carried next to their hearts, a past



Front row, left to right: my mother's mother, brother and father, all born in Warsaw. Kayla (Kalah) Miedzyrzecki Kawer (1898-1942), Eleazer Kawer (1925-1942) and Moshe David Kawer (1882-1942). Back row, left to right, my aunt and my mother: Maria Godlewska (Yehudit) Kawer (1922-2003) and Regina (Ruchel) Kawer (1920-1990).

summed up in one word, the Holocaust, a black hole that swallowed grandparents, cousins, and whole families.

But, oddly, not some objects.

There were other "survivors": a vast set of Meissen blue onion china in a cabinet, crowned with a turreted tureen, served with a salt cellar, stacked with plates and platters. And scores of pieces of heavy old silver, dinner forks, lunch forks, fish forks, matching knives, and spoons. The blue crossed swords on the Meissen suggested various centuries, and the silver had hallmarks, one from post-war Vienna, the other too obscure to read. (Buried outside Warsaw, and dug up after the war, the corroded metal had to be recast is what my mother told me.)

The silver had survived; but the son she had buried with her own hands had not.

The china and silver came out occasionally, mostly at Passover and once when family from those who had emigrated before the war gathered from other continents. But the Meissen was usually locked up; my mother favored breakfronts with keys, and glass with latticed metal, like prison bars, guarding the contents. I have no idea what she thought of when she saw it — did it bring back images of Shabbos meals, latkes and Passovers? How could porcelain survive when her parents had perished? She wept inconsolably when a leg of the salt cellar snapped.

I glued it back for her, a symbolic act I now see, for we children of Holocaust survivors often felt the need to mend a broken world for our parents, by being, breathing, succeeding. The china, the silver, her grandmother's earrings, which I have in a safety deposit box for my nieces, are just things, but they're powerful amulets, as rare as moon rocks, objects to render a lost universe. When none of us are left to remember their stories, will they be inert and dead, too, trinkets tossed in a second hand shop, like the amethyst necklace?

I know not; all I know is that they are part and parcel of the many things my parents passed more unwillingly to me.

Is it in my genes? I have the same fears that haunted them, the same need to find lost



Regina Kawer Greene, born in Warsaw, Poland (1920-1990) and Samuel Greene, born in Slawatycze, Poland (1914-2013) were married in Europe in 1939 and came to the US after the war in 1948.



Photo taken in my father Samuel's hometown of Slawatycze, probably about 1930. The boy in the first row, sitting, the second from the left, is believed to be Samuel. The names and fates of the others are unknown. Most of the Jews of that town did not survive.

things no matter how insignificant, the ability to see doom in the most minor mishaps. Five minutes late translates into a death on the highway. Born in America, knowing only comfort and ease, I have inherited a dread of chaos erupting to devour order and sanity; it is also present in the generation behind me.

But it is redeemed with the need to tell their stories, to keep their past from repeating, to stop other Holocausts from happening. When I see the silverware in drawers, the forks stacked orderly, spoons cradled in one another, different images come to mind: tangled corpses of concentration camp

bodies tumbled chaotically. My ancestors who held that buried silver never had a burial ceremony.

How is one to reconcile such an irony? People are murdered; we polish their silver.

The photos, the salt cellar with its glue mark make me weep. But they remind me to fight for justice and against genocide still rising, to fix a world in need of mending. Isn't this our true Holocaust inheritance, not china, not silver, not an amethyst necklace? ■

Harlan Greene is a Charleston writer, archivist and historian, and son of Holocaust survivors.

My Father — Pincus Kolender

My father, Pincus Kolender, was born on February 8, 1925, in Bochnia, Poland, one of three children. His early life was filled with school, family, Judaism, and friends. This all changed when the Nazis invaded Poland.

In late 1942, the Nazis told the leader of the Bochnian Jewish community to pick 150 people to stay in the ghetto; the remaining residents would be sent to concentration camps. Since my father's family knew the leader, they were placed on the protected list. However, it turned out that 250 people were granted protection. This infuriated the Nazi leader, who immediately grabbed 100 people, including my father's mother, Rachel, and shot them in front of the entire horrified



JEFF KOLENDER

community. My father and other teenagers were forced to collect the bodies and place them in a pile to be burned. He tried to pull his mother's body aside to later give her a decent burial. However, a Nazi soldier spotted him and hit him over his head with the butt of his rifle, screaming "filthy Jew."

His father, Yechiel, an accountant, was murdered in the Plaszow concentration camp, and his sister, Roiza, was killed in the Treblinka concentration camp. My father and his brother, Avram, were sent to Auschwitz. Upon arrival, Josef Mengele, the infamous Angel of Death, divided the newcomers into two lines. My father and his brother were sent to the left line, which was full of very ill and very old people. Sensing something was amiss, my father grabbed his brother and, when no one was looking, ran to the right line. The people in the left line were sent to the gas chambers, and my father and his brother survived, soon to be assigned to hard labor.

My father and his brother survived the numerous horrors of Auschwitz. In January, 1945, the Germans, realizing the Allied forces were closing in, took my father and an estimated 60,000 Auschwitz prisoners on a "Death March" for over 35 miles in the cold and snow. During the march, my father's brother attempted to escape and presumably was shot, never to be seen again. Later in the march, my father collapsed from



starvation and pain; an elderly prisoner picked him up and scolded him "you are young, keep walking, you need to survive." In April, 1945, he and many other prisoners were placed on a train to take them away from the oncoming Allied forces. When an American fighter plane shot at the train, my father jumped off and ran, despite bullets flying all around him. He and another escapee eventually stopped at the house of a Czechoslovakian farmer and explained their situation. The farmer, risking his life, dug a foxhole for them to hide, and fed them. Unfortunately, he fed them too well, as my father got very sick, not having eaten real food in more than two years. The farmer went into town on his horse and buggy in the middle of the night, and brought



Pincus Kolender's arm, with the ID number still visible after more than 40 years.



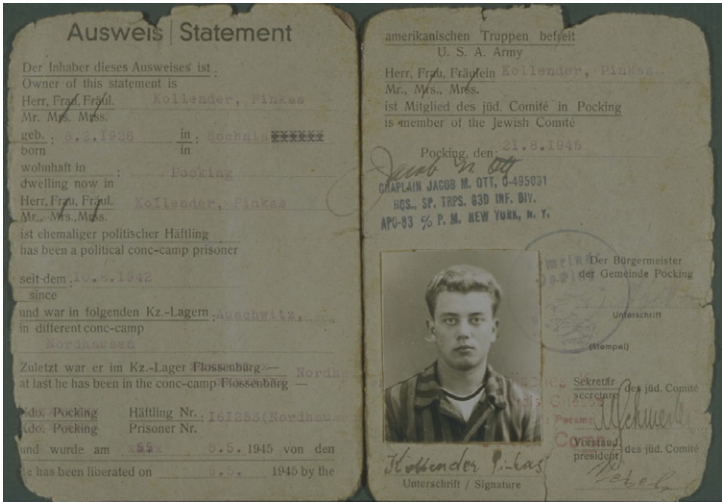
Above: Pincus Kolender visiting his barracks at Auschwitz in 1987. Left: Serving in the US army, circa 1952. Below: His Auschwitz ID card.

a doctor back to the farm. The doctor, also risking his life, saved my father's life. After 16 days of hiding in the foxhole, and being fed by the farmer, the war ended and my father was a free man, the only survivor of his extended family. My father never forgot the extreme kindness and bravery of the farmer, referring to him as an "angel from heaven." After the war, as a result of the restrictive immigration policies then in effect, my father was not allowed into the U.S. until 1951. He wanted to live in New York or Chicago, cities

he had heard so much about. However, upon his arrival in Ellis Island, he was told that the Jewish Community Center in Charleston, S.C., had agreed to sponsor him. Charleston, he said, what is that? Charleston turned out to be wonderful. He proudly served in the U.S. Army, met and married my mother, Renee Kolender, also a Holocaust survivor, had three children (and eventually six grandchildren), opened and ran Globe Furniture Company, made many friends, and became an integral

part of the community. Soon after retirement, he, along with his good friend and fellow Auschwitz survivor Joe Engel, started to speak publicly about their experiences. He spoke to hundreds of thousands of people, warning of the dangers of hatred. While having to constantly recall his experiences often resulted in nightmares, he realized that may have been the reason he survived — to speak about his experiences and try to prevent another Holocaust. He spoke not of revenge or animosity, but of the

need to judge people by their character, not by their religion, color or background. Despite his experiences, my father thought life was good, and was the eternal optimist. He was tough and resilient, but also extremely kind and generous. He carried himself with great dignity, but greater humor. As he always said — every day is a new day, and be grateful for what you have, whether it is a comfortable bed, a warm meal, or the love of family and friends. ■





Pincus and Renee cutting their wedding cake on November 1, 1953 at the Francis Marion Hotel in Charleston.

My Mother — Renee Kolender

My mother, Renee Kolender, was born in 1922, in Kozenice, Poland, the daughter of Moishe, a CPA, and Rose Fuchs. She claimed to be “spoiled rotten,” as the only girl of three children, and enjoyed a nice childhood, at least until September 1, 1939, her 17th birthday, when the Nazis invaded Poland. That was the end of school, the “end of everything.” Her family was then moved to her grandparents’ house in the ghetto.

Her father and older brother, Yitzchak, were murdered early in the war. In 1943, she and her mother were sent to a munitions factory in Czeszochowa, Poland, as slave laborers. For her daily work, she was given red crayons (to be used as markers for the ammunition) and rubber gloves, which she would keep at the end of the day. On occasion, the camp doctors would examine the prisoners, with those prisoners deemed unhealthy to be sent to their deaths. On those days, my mother and her mother would use the crayons both as lipstick and to add color to their

cheeks, and use the gloves as bows for their hair, to brighten their appearance and make them appear healthier.

They also dressed my mother’s younger brother, Michael, who was only 9 years old, as a girl, to allow him to stay in their camp. Otherwise, he would have been separated from them, and surely sent to his death. If my mother and grandmother’s ploy had been discovered, they would have been shot immediately.



Renee Kolender’s (née Fuchs) father’s family, the Fuchs (changed to Fox in the U.S.). Photo taken in Koszenica, Poland, ca. 1925-26.



Above: Renee and her brother Michael on the boat to the United States in January 1947 (photo on display at the Holocaust Museum).

She was constantly beaten at the camp. However, she said she would never give the soldiers the satisfaction of seeing her cry. The hunger, humiliation, and dehumanization were awful, and the only times she was happy was when the camp was bombed. But her mother kept her morale up, and gave her a reason to live.

At one point, my mother suffered from typhoid fever. She refused to go to the infirmary, having heard too many stories about patients never returning from there. Luckily, she recovered. Unfortunately, however, just before the end of the war, her mother died. A kind soldier allowed my mother to go to the burial. On the back of a picture of her and her mother, she drew a map outlining the steps from the camp to the grave.

My mother and her brother were liberated in Czeszochowa by American soldiers in 1945. Being the only survivors in their family, they had nowhere to go, as their house in Kozenice had been taken over by local residents. She wrote a letter to an uncle and aunt, Otto and Sarah Fox, in Charleston, asking for help. (Family lore has it that the envelope was addressed to “Otto Fox, Charleston, S.C.”) Otto contacted Congressman Mendel Rivers, who helped pave the way for my mother and her brother to get into the U.S. in 1947.

In Charleston, she worked at her uncle’s store, Fox Music House, until she married my father, Pincus Kolender, also a Holocaust

survivor. They had three children and six grandchildren. That, she said, was their biggest victory, and their greatest joy. They survived and flourished, and the Nazis are but a horrific historical footnote.

My mother’s brother, Michael Fox, went to the Citadel, married Janice Kramer, and soon thereafter moved to Janice’s hometown, Wallace, North Carolina. He became a successful businessman, and also had three children and six grandchildren.

It was difficult for my mother to talk about the war. In 1987, our extended family went on an emotional trip to Poland. It was on that trip that I learned many things about my mother’s past, most notably how her family members were killed. We went to the location of the munitions factory in Czeszochowa. Using the (still legible) map she drew in 1945 on the back of the picture of her mother, we tried to retrace the steps to find where her mother was buried. While we did not find the exact location, it allowed us to recite Kaddish (the Jewish prayer for deceased family members) for my grandmother, which my mother and uncle were unable to do at the time of their mother’s death, giving them much comfort after all these years.

My mother said life straightens itself out. She taught my siblings and me compassion and the importance of family. Most importantly, she wanted a better life for her children. And she certainly succeeded in that. ■

Jeff Kolender is a Maryland attorney and son of Holocaust Survivors.

“You Are Free Now!”

It is worth living! True! For all the wanderings, torture and the whole tragedy, you have a family and a purpose in life. It was bad and hopeless and now it is better and hope in the future.”

Polish town 50 miles east of Warsaw. Ryłski was the owner of a glass factory in Czeszochowa, Poland and one of the Righteous Poles who helped my mother and her sister, my aunt survive.

The stories of my parents’ survival differed dramatically. My father, Henry Popowski was eleven years older than my mother Paula, and lived as a young man in Warsaw in the late 1930’s. When Germany invaded Poland he was conscripted into the Polish army. After Poland surrendered, he found his way back to Kaluszyn to warn his family of the impending danger and urged them to leave. Two of his six siblings hid in the woods, and the remainder of the Popowski family perished. My father sought refuge in the Warsaw ghetto, and subsequently was incarcerated in the following concentration camps: Kraśnik, Plaszow and

Ebensee, a sub-camp of Mauthausen. He survived because of his skills as a carpenter, his family’s trade. When he was liberated by the U.S. Army in May 1945, he and several friends attached themselves to a MASH unit and ultimately reached Landshut, Germany, near Munich where a displaced persons community evolved.

My mother escaped from Kaluszyn to a labor camp four miles away. Her father,



Left: portrait of Paula from her false identification papers. Right: Paula and her sister Hannah.

They migrated to Czeszochowa, nearly 200 miles from Kaluszyn. There they lived in a convent and worked in the Ryłski glass factory, using their Catholic identities. After they were liberated in January 1945

Moshe Kornblum, had buried a number of gold coins in their yard. My mother’s family owned the largest enterprise in Kaluszyn, a flour mill, so she began her journey with the remaining assets of that business. My mother, accompanied by her sister Hannah, sewed the coins into their coats and dresses and used them for food, rent, and bribery. (A family friend, the late and beloved South Carolina author Pat Conroy memorialized their story in the character “The Lady with the Coins” in his novel *Beach Music*.)

Specifically, my Aunt Hannah, with the help of Stanislaw Wozniak, a Catholic work associate of my Grandfather, came to the labor camp and facilitated my mother’s escape. My mother and my aunt, with Mr. Wozniak’s assistance, traveled to Warsaw where they acquired false identification papers, posing as Catholics. Paula Kornblum became Apollonia Borkowska.



Above: Popowski family portrait, 1957.

So wrote Mieczyslaw Ryłski to my Mother in 1957 after she sent him our first professional family picture from Charleston, SC. Mr. Ryłski was a Righteous Gentile who employed my mother Paula and her sister Hannah after their escape. He exemplified the teachings of the Torah.

Kol ma shetirtzu sheya’a’su lachem bney ha’adam, ken gam atem asu lahem.



DAVID POPOWSKI

“Do onto others as you would have them do onto you.”

That is the guiding principle of mankind. When they were finally liberated in Czeszochowa in January, 1945, and in their last conversation with Mr. Ryłski, as they left him, my Mother and

Aunt asked him: “Why did you do this?” He responded: “I have daughters, and if they were in your circumstances, I hope someone would have helped them.”

I am the child of Holocaust survivors. Henry and Paula Kornblum Popowski were both from the small town of Kaluszyn, a



Paula Popowski

The Post and Courier Paula Popowski

I was very sad to learn of the passing of Charleston’s Paula Popowski whose obituary appeared in the Sept. 18 issue of The Post and Courier, an obituary that chronicled a small part of her extraordinary life.

Cassandra King Conroy and I spoke and shared this thought: If Cassandra’s husband Pat Conroy were alive he would have been honored to deliver her eulogy. Paula was not only a dear friend of Pat’s, but her Holocaust survival story became the inspiration for one of his most extraordinary characters, “The Lady of the Coins,” in *Beach Music*. Paula’s true story of terror and the kindness of strangers were essential threads in that novel.

I hope that Paula’s children and grandchildren take some comfort in knowing that she inspired a great novel that will continue to be read by millions around the world. This may well be one small example of the triumph of art and essential goodness over darkness. May Paula Popowski’s name and memory be eternally blessed.

MARLY RUSOFF
Cecil Crest Road
Bronxville, New York

by the Russian army, they returned home to Kaluszyn. There, they confirmed that my grandparents, their brother, and numerous family members were gone. The flour mill had been seized by the Polish government now under Russian control.

In Kaluszyn, Paula and Hannah did find a group of family friends who had survived and together they traveled to Landshut, Germany, where my parents met. They remained there until 1949, waiting for approval to immigrate to America. During that time, they married and the first of their four children, my brother, Mark, was born.

My parents’ immigration to Charleston was sponsored by cousins Joseph and Rachel Zucker. Charleston had a uniquely large number of ex-patriot Kalushiners dating back to the late 19th century. Thus, the city was a welcoming place for my parents, Henry and Paula, to begin their new lives—indeed, they were the last Kalushiners to make Charleston their home. I was born in Charleston, followed by my two sisters, Sarah and Martha. My father first was a peddler in Charleston, Berkeley and Dorchester Counties, and in 1961 he and my mother opened and operated Henry’s Furniture Company on King Street in downtown Charleston. Their four children and all six grandchildren are college graduates and productive citizens having heeded this constant refrain: “America is the best country, be grateful and be a part of it.”

Henry Popowski (obm) 82 years old, passed away on May 5, 1994, almost 49 years to the day of his liberation. Paula K Popowski (obm) 94 years old, passed away on September 17, 2017, 72 years after she and my aunt were awoken by a Nun at the convent with the words, “You are free now.” ■

David Popowski is a Charleston attorney, civil litigator and business law, and son of Holocaust survivors.

Consequences of War and Violence

Everyone was so excited for the arrival of Philip and Evaline Krant's first born, on May 20, 1938. They had a very large and close extended family and the joy that their daughter Dientje brought to the family was palpable. The couple lived in Bussum, Holland.

Diny (Dientje) was very active and rambunctious and she loved living above the store where her father and uncle worked. It was very close to the village center and with her aunt and uncle living next door, there was never a shortage of love and laughter. Diny recalls licking the frosting from a bowl her aunt handed her from their shared balcony and laughing with her and her mother while they cooked in the kitchen. All seemed wonderful.

On May 4, 1940, Holland was occupied by the Nazis and life for all was changed. Philip, trying to keep his family safe, placed Diny in a children's home, passing Diny off



EVALINE DELSON



PHILLIS MAIR

as a Christian child. If Diny had been a quiet child, this might have worked, but she was so excited about her next birthday when she "would be given her yellow star" that the plan had to change. By 1942, the school behind their home was occupied by the Nazis. One day Diny could not be found. Suddenly, they noticed Diny marching behind a group of soldiers with a pot on her head. Her parents quickly understood that it was time to go into hiding.

Philip managed to find only separate places for his family through a mixture of charm, business smarts, and luck. Diny kept the beloved doll "Anneka Pop" as she moved into a house in Laren, Holland, with "Maatje and Paatje," endearing names for grandparents. They were a caring, sweet, older couple who worked hard to pretend to be Diny's grandparents, even taking photos with her in a photo studio.

However, the situation took a frightening turn and Diny had to leave. The family had been betrayed. An individual who "helped" Philip find a hiding place, was a traitor.



Diny Krant with her beloved doll Anneka Pop in 1942.

This "traitor" was making money by telling the Nazis where Jewish people were hiding. The family had moved 7 times over four years and these memories haunted Diny for decades: being alone and being thrown out of a moving train. Once she was thrown from the train car, Diny recalls a group of nuns collecting bits of coal on the



Diny circa 2018.



side of train tracks scooping her up and taking her to "safety." Now, Diny was in the care of a Catholic woman named Doortje Van Kloppenberg. She spent the majority of her time locked in a very small closet with her "Anneka Pop" doll and a commode bowl. Occasionally, she was allowed to go to church with Doortje. One midnight mass, as she was walking with Doortje, they came upon a drunken Nazi, beating a man on a tree. Frightened by what she saw, Diny began screaming and crying. This Nazi directed his brutality to Diny and kicked her in the stomach. Soon violence became worse for Diny and Doortje's brother became involved. His mental cruelty turned to sexual abuse. In May 5, 1945, when Diny was almost 7 years old, Holland was liberated from Nazi rule, but Diny was changed! She was sure that her parents were dead and took solace in the only thing she knew, her Catholic faith.

Surprisingly, Diny was ultimately reunited with her parents who were found by a sister-in-law. About 20% of the Krant family survived. Despite reunification with her parents, Diny had drastically changed from a very outgoing happy child to a traumatized child, who felt isolated and



Evaline Krant with baby Diny; Philip and Evaline with Diny as a toddler in Holland.



terrorized. The experiences of her young life continues to affect Diny. Her parents adopted an orphan, daughter Roos, and had another child, a son Jacob, who was born after the war. But neither parent had recovered from the physical and mental tragedies of the war and a "normal" family life was not possible.

In 1955, Diny left Holland and found work with Holland America. She worked as a nanny and traveled all over the world, with stops in Canada and California. Returning to Europe, Diny met Leonard Kalisky in Germany when they were both "stood up" by blind dates. Leonard noted Diny's Star of David necklace, and then pulled his out and announced, "I'm Jewish, too." They married in 1963 and moved to Kingstree, South Carolina, where Leonard was raised, then to Charleston. In 1967 they had their first born, a son, Karol, followed by two daughters, Evaline and Phillis.

Despite Diny's desire to work outside of the home, her mental health struggles endured and in 1979, the family moved to Holland to help Diny receive mental health treatment at the hospital Centrum 45 in *Oegstgeest*, a specific facility for Holocaust Survivors. They returned to Charleston in 1981. Diny met Roscoe Adkins in September, 1988 and married in 2002. Sadly, he passed away in 2007. War and violence had taken a devastating toll on all involved. ■

Evaline Delson, the owner of Delson Chiropractic and Phillis Mair, an artist and office manager of Delson Chiropractic are the daughters of Diny Kalisky Adkins.

When Art is All That Remains

A genocide's effects are so much bigger than the number of direct victims it produces. Even when this number is as unfathomable as six million. It doesn't stop there. The survivors, their descendants, the victims' families, the innocent witnesses' psyche, the soul of entire communities and nations (victims' and victimizers'), and the natural environment suffer from it for much longer than we can imagine.



F.K. SCHOEMAN

Even our material culture is impacted by it. Should we care about objects, when lives are at stake? We must. Because what we have is who we are: our brief passage through life is told and preserved by the physical traces we leave behind. The Nazis understood this, and in order to rid the world of Jews, they knew they also had to get rid of all traces of Jew-

ish culture and belongings. They did so by either destroying what was not needed or stealing what was of value.

For decades, Jewish families fought to recuperate the possessions, works of art in particular, taken away from them by the war criminals.

But there is also another



Charlotte Saloman, self-portrait



Charlotte Saloman painting in the garden at Villefranche-sur-Mer, France. *Wikipedia*

paradoxical angle to this drama: that of the loss of Jewish artists whose creations were all that was left, once their lives were brutally stolen.

Today, I wish to remember such a case. Her name was Charlotte Saloman, born in Berlin in 1917. She was a painter.

She didn't know her mother, who (she was told) had died when she was still a baby. But she was brought up by a doting father (Albert Salomon, a surgeon) and his second wife (world-famous opera singer, Paula Salomon-Lindberg) who loved Charlotte like her own and infused in her a passion for high culture.

In 1939, Albert and Paula thought it safer for their only daughter to leave Berlin and find refuge on the Côte d'Azur, France, where her maternal grandparents had already emigrated as soon as Hitler came to power.

While in France, the three exiles followed on the radio the worsening

conditions for the Jews in Germany and central-eastern Europe. Once the war began, Charlotte's grandmother descended into such panic that, incapable of facing what the future appeared to have in store for them, she took her own life. This was a terrible shock for Charlotte, compounded by an even worse revelation: her bereft grandfather confessed to her that her biological mother too had killed herself. These weren't the only two cases, either. Suicide seemed to run in her family.

Charlotte and her grandfather, alone in this foreign occupied country, were interned in Gurs concentration camp in 1940 and released after two months. Charlotte's terror and distress were too intense: she had a nervous breakdown. But instead of taking the same terminal route other members of her family had chosen before her, she did something different: She turned to art.

She would paint her life and tell the story of her rich and cultivated family, her upbringing, her devotion to music and the arts, her first love (Alfred Wolfsohn—her stepmother's voice trainer), and how all of it came to a crushing end because of antisemitism and Hitler's plan to destroy the Jews and her country.

Hers would become the very first Jewish graphic memoir we know of.

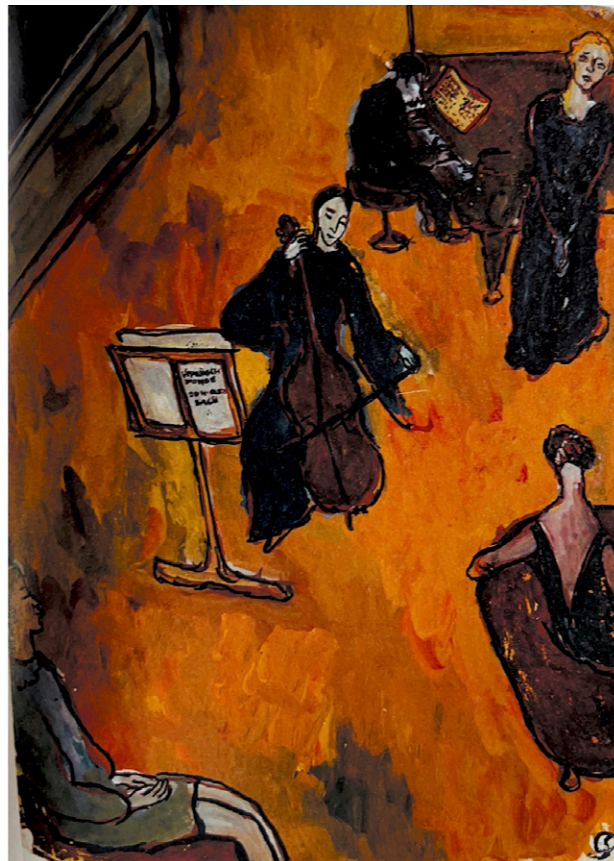
She took residence at La Belle Aurore, in Nice, and plunged herself undividedly into the composition of her first-of-its-kind autobiography in the third-person narration, whose genesis she explains in these words:

"Despite her utter weakness, however, she [Charlotte] refused to be drawn into the circle of the straw-graspers ... and remained alone with her experiences and her paint brush ... And she found herself facing the question of whether to commit suicide or to undertake something wildly eccentric."

Salomon's response to the frightful historical circumstances was to affirm life via her art.

Often refusing to eat or sleep, she worked feverishly on her magnum opus and finished it in 1942. It comprises 769 gouaches that include images, texts, lyrics and music. It is in fact organized like a musical composition and provides stage directions like a play or operetta.

Marthe Pécher, the owner of La Belle Aurore, reports that while the young artist drew night and day, one could hear her sing and hum incessantly. As Salomon painted her life story in the shadow of the collapse of Western civilization, she was listening to the sublime aria "Bist du bei mir" by J. S. Bach whose lyrics, sung by Paula into her ears through a gramophone, declare: "Be thou with me, and I'll go with joy toward death and to my rest." Her stepmother



Concert at Home. The opera singer, Paula Salomon-Lindberg, Charlotte's stepmother, gives a private performance at home.

had recorded this song just before the Nazis ended her phenomenal career.

For the Jewish upper middle class to which Salomon belonged, literature, painting and music were far more than a simple form of entertainment: they were the aesthetic language that allowed an expanding civilization to express its utopian dream of transcendence, the dream that worldly ugliness (of which antisemitism was a major component) could be sublimated, and thus overcome, through the salvific beauty of art. But this civilization, which seemed to be at its glorious height as Europe ushered in the twentieth century and its promises of prodigious progress, descended into total beastliness with the crimes of World War II.

This young woman's story shows how art is not trivial in our existence but, on the contrary, makes us human, keeps us sane, is a tool of resistance against injustice, and it can be a life-saving force for the victims of such injustice. For Anne Frank, it was writing. For Fania Fénelon, it was playing piano and composing music (even in Auschwitz). For Charlotte Salomon, it was painting to the end.

Caught between suicide (seemingly destined for her by genetic derangement) and Auschwitz (destined for her by national derangement), Salomon found a way out of this crisis and courageously chose to make reality endurable through art.

Her autobiographical operetta ends with these words: *"And with dream-awakened eyes she saw all the beauty around her, saw the sea, felt the sun, and knew: she had to vanish for a while from the human plane and make every sacrifice in order to create her world anew out of the depths ... And from that came: Life or Theatre?"*

"And with dream-awakened eyes she saw all the beauty around her, saw the sea, felt the sun, and knew: she had to vanish for a while from the human plane and make every sacrifice in order to create her world anew out of the depths ... And from that came: Life or Theatre?"



The very last page of her work (now, of her book). The caption painted on the back of her self-portrait, while working by the sea, reads: "Leben oder Theater" "Life? or Theatre?"

Just before she and the man she had married that spring were loaded on a Gestapo truck one September evening in 1943, Salomon carefully packaged her drawings and brought them to a friend with the request: "Keep this safe: It is my whole life."

They were deported to Auschwitz: she was twenty-six. Salomon was gassed on arrival because she was five months pregnant. Her condition made her so inconsequential to the Nazis that they neither used her for work nor wasted the ink necessary to tattoo her arm or register her in their records. Yet if her passage through Auschwitz was too irrelevant to be recorded anywhere by the camp's fastidious bureaucracy, her passage through life and the twentieth century is indelibly marked by her work: the first Holocaust graphic autobiography — saved by a goodhearted Samaritan, returned to the artist's family after the war, and published today under the enigmatic title, *Life? or Theatre?* ■

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The Nazi Takeover. The script to reads: "The swastika — a symbol bright of hope — The day for freedom and for bread now dawns — Just at this time, many Jews — who, with all their often undesirable efficiency, are perhaps a pushy and insistent race, happened to be occupying government and other senior positions. After the Nazi takeover of power they were all dismissed without notice. Here you see how this affected a number of different souls that were both human and Jewish!"

Will the Lost Museum ...

The journalist Hector Feliciano published a book first in French in 1995 and then in English in 1997 called *The Lost Museum* in which he called attention to the collections in many countries of unclaimed art that had been looted by the Nazis and their allies, collections that had been recovered by the United States military forces and others that after World War II had been sent back to the countries from which they had been taken but had never been distributed by those countries' governments to the original owners or their heirs. Instead they had been kept in those governments' museums. It is surprising how many such artworks and other cultural property known to have been looted in the Holocaust remain to this day in the hands of governments throughout the world.



WESLEY FISHER

By "unclaimed 'heirless' looted art" is meant not only paintings and sculptures but also religious ceremonial objects, books and manuscripts that have been identified

or presumed to be items looted from their Jewish owners by the Nazis, their allies, or collaborators for which no heirs have been located to date. It is rare for an object to be truly "heirless." Rather the term is used as a way of characterizing unclaimed property in the wake of the Shoah, in the wake of genocide.

In the West, collections of unclaimed and heirless looted art came to be as a result of the policies of the United States, the United Kingdom, and France whereby items for which the original owners could not be immediately identified were repatriated to the capitals of the respective



In 2003, the American Alliance of Museums established the Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal (NEPIP), a central registry of objects in U.S. museums that could have changed hands in Europe during the Nazi era, 1933-1945. Currently 179 museums are participating, which includes 20 museums with Judaica collections, and an additional 32 museums that report not to hold any relevant objects. Currently 29,864 objects are listed. There is more updated information available on various museum websites.

At a conference in 2018 in Israel, the Jerusalem Declaration was endorsed that proposed that unclaimed "heirless" objects be made available on loan for exhibitions around the world. Hopefully this will transpire, and the "lost museum" will become the "found museum."

countries from which they had been taken. The U.S. Military referred to this as an "external restitution" policy. The Cold War was beginning, and it was important to end problems that remained from World War II as soon as possible.

However, the Jews of the world considered it morally inadmissible and a legal problem for non-Jewish organizations or people to hold on to heirless or unclaimed artwork and cultural objects taken from their Jewish owners by way of plunder, confiscation, seizure, or forced sale. Although

after pogroms and expulsions the Jews of the world had usually moved on, the enormity of the Nazi theft and murder was such that this time they stood their ground and insisted on as full restitution as possible. In November 1947 U.S. Military Law 59 was enacted in the American Zone of Occupied Germany. It called for the restoration of identifiable property that had been seized on racial, political, or religious grounds, and also established the principle that a "successor organization" would have the right to claim the assets of those who had perished,

and to use the proceeds of the sales of the assets for the relief and rehabilitation of survivors. In June of 1948 the U.S. Military Government in Germany authorized the Jewish Restitution Successor Organization (JRSO) to recover unclaimed Jewish property and the property of dissolved Jewish communities and associations in the American Zone. Similar organizations were formed in the British and French Zones. The Jewish organizations that formed the JRSO were from not only the United States but also from the rest of the world. A specialized organization, Jewish Cultural Reconstruction (JCR), that had begun as a scholarly initiative eventually was established in 1947 to redistribute heirless Jewish cultural property in the American zone.

In the East, the Soviet Union followed a different path, that of "compensatory restitution" for all the cultural property that Nazi Germany had plundered or destroyed. In 1942 Igor Grabar, the principal art historian of the Soviet Union, convinced Josef Stalin that lists should be drawn up of artworks to be taken for such compensation. These lists were mostly of Italian artworks, but by the time the Red Army reached Berlin, Italy was no longer in the war, and the Soviet Trophy Brigades charged with taking artworks and other cultural property back to Moscow began to take whatever was in their path, so millions of objects were brought to the Soviet Union. While some of these were returned to the communist countries of Eastern Europe in the 1950s and 1960s, millions of objects remain in the former Soviet Union.

Issues of looted art were for decades after the war backburned in view of the need for survivors to be resettled and the need to cope with the sheer magnitude of the destruction. With the fall of communism and the opening of archives in



Left: Offenbach, Germany, some of the six hundred Torah scrolls that were brought to the Offenbach Archival Depot from all over the American-administered area of Germany, 1946. Second from left: In a cellar in Frankfurt, Germany, Chaplain Samuel Blinder examines Sefer Torahs stolen from across Europe. Photo, National Archives. Third from left: Torah breast plates. Right: Chanukah Candelabra confiscated by Nazis. USHMM courtesy of S. J. Pomrenze

Become The Found Museum?



Exhibition from May to August 2017, in the medieval Bergkerk cathedral in Deventer, Netherlands entitled “Looted Art – Before, During and After WWII.” The show featured 75 looted art works from the Dutch Art Property Collection consisting of looted “heirless” objects.

the 1990's, this changed, and restitution of cultural property came to the fore. Though no treaties or international laws were passed, there have been a series of conferences and declarations, of which the most important in this area have been the Washington Conference on Holocaust-Era Assets in 1998, the Vilnius International Forum on Holocaust-Era Cultural Assets in 2000, and the Prague Holocaust Era Assets Conference in 2009. In regard to unclaimed “heirless” looted art, the Washington Conference Principles urged that steps be taken expeditiously to achieve a just and fair solution. At the Vilnius International Forum the State of Israel proposed that all such unclaimed “heirless” looted art be transferred to Israel, but France, the United States, and other countries did not agree. However, the Vilnius Forum recognized that there is no universal model for this issue and recognized the previous Jewish ownership of such cultural assets. The Prague Conference's Terezin Declaration urged the cataloguing, listing, and preservation

of all such cultural objects and specifically referred to Judaica and to libraries.

Where are these collections of unclaimed “heirless” looted art? Countries with central state collections of unclaimed

and heirless objects with public listings of those objects include Austria, the Czech Republic, France, Germany, and The Netherlands. Countries with central state collections of unclaimed and heirless

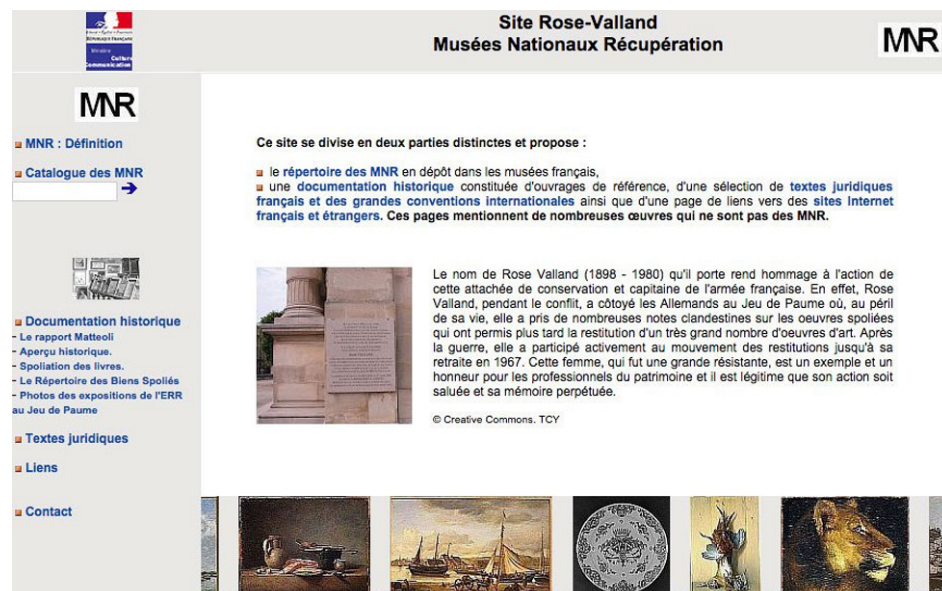
objects without public listings of those objects include Belgium, Croatia, Hungary, Israel (except for certain items in the Israel Museum), Poland, and Russia (with some unexplained exceptions). Countries with individual institutions that have unclaimed and heirless objects with public listings of those objects include Australia, Canada, United Kingdom, and the United States. Countries with individual institutions that have unclaimed and heirless objects without public listings of those objects include Finland, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

However, there are a great many countries that have done very little or no provenance research on their collections. These include Albania, Argentina, Belarus, Bosnia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Holy See, Ireland, Kosovo, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Macedonia, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Uruguay — as well as other countries in the world art market (e.g., Japan).

Many issues remain in regard to unclaimed “heirless” looted art, such as how to handle collections that are in individual hands? How to identify original owners and heirs? Who should decide on the disposition of unclaimed “heirless” looted art? Should unclaimed “heirless” looted art be sold?

As the generation of Holocaust survivors is passing, the importance of these unclaimed “heirless” objects is becoming greater. In particular, they are potentially an important way for younger generations and the general public to understand and connect with the enormity of the Holocaust and not only with the murder of the six million but also with the colossal theft and attempt to obliterate Jewish cultural and religious life that took place. At a conference in 2018 in Israel, the Jerusalem Declaration was endorsed that proposed that unclaimed “heirless” objects be made available on loan for exhibitions around the world. Hopefully this will transpire, and the “lost museum” will become the “found museum.” ■

Dr. Wesley A. Fisher is Director of Research for the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) and the World Jewish Restitution Organization (WJRO). He heads the Claims Conference-WJRO Looted Art and Cultural Property Initiative.



Listing of the over 2,000 works in the French government's collection of unclaimed “heirless” looted art. <http://www2.culture.gouv.fr/documentation/mnr/pres.htm>

Reclaiming Treasures

In 2009, the Jewish Museum in Amsterdam opened an exhibition entitled *Reclaimed: Paintings from the Collection of Jacques Goudstikker*. Some two hundred art works — rarely seen Dutch and Flemish Masters as well as Italian Renaissance paintings — adorned the museum walls, offering visitors a glimpse of art treasures



SASKIA COENEN SNYDER

stolen by the Nazis. Three years prior to the exhibit, after decades of legal bickering over ownership rights, the Goudstikker family had finally received what was rightfully theirs. In one of the largest restitutions of Nazi-looted art, the Dutch government, tenaciously holding on to masterpieces in its national collections, agreed to return the paintings to their original owners.

The canvases had belonged to Jacques Goudstikker, a Jewish art dealer in Amsterdam, whose extraordinary collection of some 1,400 works earned renown in the interwar period. His gallery, located in a seventeenth-century mansion on one

of the city's prominent canals, contained paintings and drawings by Rembrandt, Salomon van Ruysdael, and Frans Hals, as well as sculptures and antiques. Goudstikker catered to leading collectors of his day, selling art to Dutch institutions as well as to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Art Institute of Chicago, and the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC. He organized national and international art fairs, festivals, and exposés, some of which had enduring significance to the Dutch art scene and helped foster an appreciation of foreign work.

When the Nazis marched into Holland, Goudstikker realized that he, his wife Dési, and their young son Edo were targets and needed to leave the continent immediately. In mid-May, carrying expired immigration visas to the United States, the family boarded the last cargo boat to England. Tragically, as the SS *Bodegraven* crossed the English Channel to safety, Goudstikker went up on deck to catch some air. In pitch dark, he failed to notice an uncovered hatch and plunged to his death. He had escaped the Nazis but broke his neck in the process, leaving behind a grief-stricken wife and son.

In the immediate aftermath of Goudstikker's demise, *Reichsmarschall* Hermann

SEPTEMBER 8, 1945.

WASHINGTON NEWS

B

Woman Seeks Return of Art Stolen by Goering Worth Million

Dutch Widow Here Hopes to Recover Valuable Collection

Mrs. Desi Halban-Goudstikker, widow of a Dutch art dealer, is in Washington today hoping to recover an art collection valued at more than \$1,000,000 which was appropriated by Hermann Goering when the Nazis invaded Holland. The collection was unearthed by the Allies in Germany.

Mrs. Halban-Goudstikker called at the Netherlands Embassy and the State Department and satisfied herself the authorities have in mind the return of her Goering-filched property.

She is not the usual elderly and sedate owner of a large art collection. She is youthful, slender, with the chic of her native Vienna, and with its gaiety, save when she touched on the tragic story of her flight from Holland. She told that story in an interview at the Mayflower Hotel.

Husband Killed on Ship.

She and her husband, Jacques



MRS. DESI HALBAN-GOUDSTIKKER.

—Star Staff Photo.

her son, Edward, 6, is in school. She has resumed her singing and is appearing on the concert stage.

Their castle of Niejenrode is now occupied by Canadian troops. "The

Göring, Hitler's second-in-command, waltzed into the art dealer's gallery and selected approximately eight hundred of the most valuable pieces. He sent them to Germany, where they were displayed in Göring's various residences. The gallery itself and Goudstikker's properties were transferred to Göring's henchman Alois Miedl — a former banker turned art dealer with a Jewish wife — in a forced sale for a fraction of their value. Throughout the war, Miedl continued to operate the gallery under the Goudstikker name, profiting from its reputation, infrastructure, and remaining inventory. Most of the collection sold to new owners and scattered across the globe, leaving few traces. The looting of the Goudstikker estate was among the largest single acts of Nazi plunder.

After the war, Allied soldiers on German soil discovered the two hundred Goudstikker paintings. They were returned to Holland with the expectation that the

artworks would be restituted to the rightful heirs. The Dutch government, however, refused to cooperate, stubbornly keeping masterpieces in depositories and national museums. Dési's efforts to recover her family's belongings went unheeded.

Dési's granddaughter, Charlene von Saher, was more successful, not only because she armed herself with dedicated lawyers, but also because in the early 2000s political momentum had shifted. She wasn't alone in this fight, as her grandmother had been. Journalists, politicians, and legal teams were exposing past crimes and shady deals, condemning cold-hearted attempts by postwar governments and cultural institutions to "let bygones be bygones." Slowly, under public pressure, a legal infrastructure emerged to facilitate returns of Nazi looted art.

These days, a Dutch restitution commission website asks visitors directly: "Do you suspect that an art object used to belong to your family and that it was lost as a result

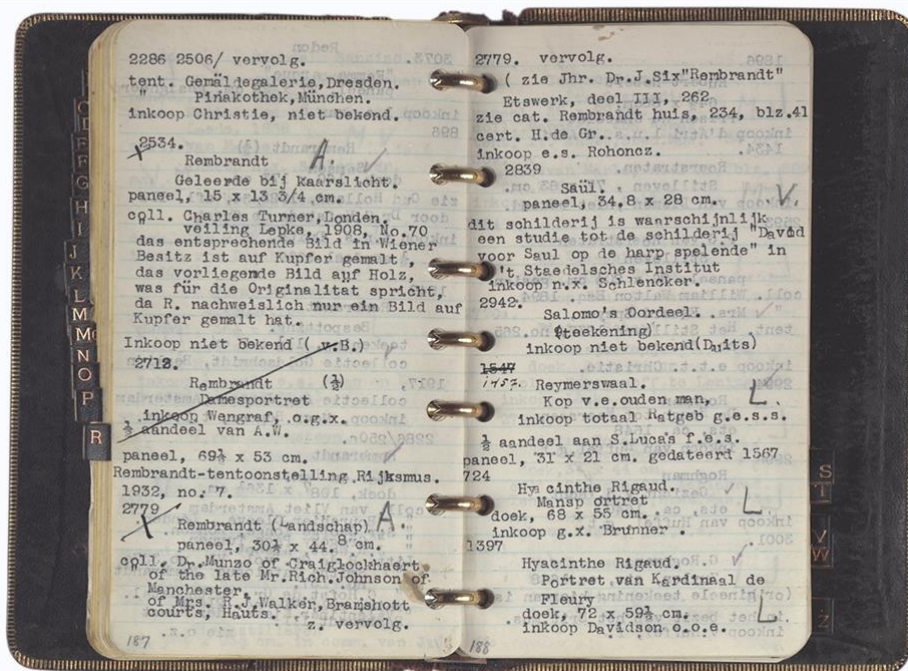


Figure 1: Jacques Goudstikker's "Black Book" of inventory

of the Nazi regime? You can then submit a request for restitution to the Advisory Committee on the Assessment of Restitution Applications for Items of Cultural Value." Encouraging claimants to step forward, the commission offers advice on the application process, organizes lectures and symposia, and publishes newsletters. Established by the Ministry of Culture, Education, and Science in The Hague, the commission is an attempt to deal with fractures that have never been allowed to heal. The Goudstikker heirs resumed battle in a changed political arena. This doesn't mean restitution is an easy process, or that success is guaranteed — roadblocks remain common and settlements sometimes fail — but there is a greater willingness to research, trace, and negotiate returns.

Restitution efforts are not a Dutch phenomenon. Numerous countries in Europe have seen the formation of local and national committees to repair, in the words of a Dutch politician, "at least *some* of the inhumane injustices done to Jews during the war." Many of these initiatives are outgrowths of the 1998 Washington Principles on Nazi-Confiscated Art — an international agreement to assist in the restitution of stolen assets — and the 1999 Council of Europe's Resolution of Looted Jewish Cultural Property. These restitution



Figure 2: Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, 1950

committees reflect more than sincere efforts to return art to rightful owners; they are a public (although very bureaucratic) attempt to come to terms with a complex past, to right wrongs decades after tragedy and loss. They also tie into larger questions

of ownership, not just of WWII treasures, but of entire collections in national museums. Who owns the beautiful African masks in the Tropenmuseum ("Tropics Museum") in Amsterdam? How were they obtained? Wrestling with violent colonial pasts, Germany, Great Britain, France, and other former imperial nations have started difficult dialogues and initiated the repatriation of African art. Last October, for example, the University of Cambridge returned a Benin bronze to Nigeria, stolen by colonial forces in the 1890s.

Restitution is a complicated and controversial process that forces governments, cultural institutions, and the public at large to wrestle with questions of identity and justice. The outcomes are not always positive and legal cases can take years, if not decades, often at great emotional cost to claimants. Current owners of Nazi-looted art have mounted technical defenses, such as statutes of limitations, to fend off legitimate claims. Tens of thousands of artworks, brazenly stolen by the likes of Göring or obtained for a pittance through forced sales, are still missing, including more than a thousand pieces belonging to the Goudstikker collection. In many cases there are no descendants to return objects to. But the attempts are there, aided by the expansion of digitized archives, advanced

tracing mechanism, and increasingly public moral imperatives to do the right thing. A lot of progress has been made, but much work remains to be done.

The paintings in the Reclaimed exhibit told a complex story. They memorialized an influential Dutch-Jewish family that contributed to making Amsterdam an international center for the art trade in the 1920s and 1930s. But the pieces on display were also symbols of a horrendous crime, reminding viewers that theft — of art, assets, jewelry, property — was not a byproduct of war, but an official Nazi policy aimed at utterly depleting a minority population to enrich the Reich and subsidize war. The Final Solution, after all, included the eradication of people and their culture. Heinrich Himmler, recognizing the totality of violence, chillingly declared that "the Nazis have to kill all the Jews because if not, their grandchildren will ask for their property back." Charlene proved Himmler right. The Reclaimed exhibit, then, evidenced a small piece of historical justice, compelling us to remember the horrors endured under the Nazi regime and to respect recent victories. ■

Saskia Coenen Snyder is Associate Professor of Modern Jewish History at the University of South Carolina.



Figure 3: "Winter Garden," by Edouard Manet, discovered in a salt mine in Merkers, Germany, April 1945 (National Archives and Records Administration)

Human Beings and Books Were Not Valuable

My child is named for two of my great-uncles. One is my mother's uncle, a kind man who showered his siblings' children and grandchildren with love. When I had chicken pox at the age of five, he came to our house, and I had to stay at the top of the stairs because he had never had chicken pox. I cried because I couldn't hug him.

The other is my father's uncle, who was murdered in June 1941 on the sidewalk in front of his house in Yurburg, Lithuania. I know almost nothing about him. His name was Jacob.

It is a strange experience to stand in front of that small green house, to ask a



MELINDA J. MENZER

Lithuanian historian generously taking the day to walk you around, "Is this where they killed Jacob?" Then we walked a few blocks to a small yellow house, my great-grandmother's house, Frieda's house, where my grandfather, Israel, grew up. Her other son Jacob was nicknamed Yankel. He had a wife and a small child, but I don't know the names of either one.

At the beginning of June 1941, there were 15,000 people in Yurburg. At the beginning of October, there were 13,000. On October 6, 1941, the mayor of the city wrote to the record office in Kaunas, the second largest city in Lithuania, to report that the 2000 Jews of the town had been successfully eliminated.

There had been two Jewish elementary schools and a high school. There had been a kosher butcher and a synagogue. When we stood in front of the little green house in 2003, there was an empty lot beside it where the synagogue had been. The townspeople burned it down. They stole whatever they thought was valuable. They destroyed the books.

The human beings and the books — they were not valuable.

The historian told us, as we stood in the street, that when the Einsatzgruppe, the mobile death squad, invaded in June of 1941, they handed

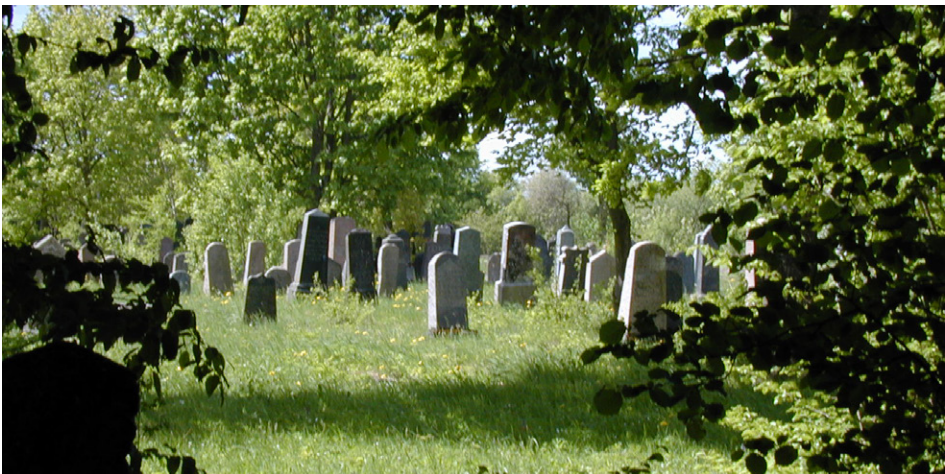


out weapons and whisky to the non-Jewish people of Yurburg. They told them that the Jews were in league with the Soviets, who had been controlling Lithuania since 1939. They told them that the Jews were responsible for their suffering. And those people took the weapons and the whisky, and they killed their Jewish neighbors.

The young men were murdered first, in two massacres away from the center of town. Then there was a pause. The women, children, and a few older men were kept in a small ghetto in the town. A person could be forgiven for thinking they were safe; who would murder women and children? But at the end of July, the Jews were brought to



The only photos my father found in his father's belongings.



Top left: my great-uncle Jacob's house in Yurburg, Lithuania. Above: the graveyard in Yurburg where my great-grandfather is buried. He was the last Jew to die before the 1941 massacres. Photos by Leon Menzer.

the town library. Lithuanian collaborators removed the bust of Joseph Stalin from display there and made the old Jewish men carry it. They took pictures of other Soviet leaders from the library and made women carry them. Then they forced all of them, the children included, to parade around the town, singing Soviet songs, while townspeople hurled rocks and bottles and screamed "Communist" at them.

This farce had one purpose: to identify the Jews with the hated Soviets, to rename and then un-name them, to make them enemies. And it worked. A few days later, the elderly women, the children, and the babies were taken to the elementary school, where they were forced to dig their own graves at gunpoint. Then their neighbors shot them. To save on bullets, the murderers killed the babies by smashing their heads into trees and throwing their bodies into the pits. A few days later, the remaining Jews of Yurburg, mostly young women, were taken into the forest and murdered there. Their bodies interned there, their names lost.

My great-grandfather has a gravestone. He died before the invasion, the last Jew to die before the murders. What a strange honor: of all your community, to have the last gravestone in an overgrown graveyard. My Hebrew is limited, but



The monument to the mostly young women Jews of Yurburg who were murdered in a forest.

I could read our name in Hebrew letters on the stone: Menzer — *mem nun tzadi resh*.

In the forest outside of town, however, the small monument there has no names, just an inscription in Yiddish: "In this place the Nazis and their collaborators destroyed the lives of five hundred Jews in a terrible way. Sept. 8, 1941." Five hundred nameless Jews, and yet everyone who died there, and everyone who was murdered in the Holocaust, was a real person, an individual as real as a beloved uncle, as real as a child crying at the top of the stairs. It is our responsibility to remember them all, those whose names we know, those whose names are lost to us. ■

Dr. Melinda J. Menzer is a professor of English at Furman University in Greenville. Granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor.

A Snapshot of a Much Greater Story

I grew up knowing — from as far back as I can remember — that my cousin, Michael Winkler, was a Holocaust survivor. But it was also understood that no one was allowed to mention the Holocaust in his presence, so I did not. The little bit that I knew, I learned from his wife, my Cousin Lorraine: first, that he had survived the camps and, second, that we could never cook lamb around him because it smelled too much like human flesh burning. As I grew older and studied Modern European History in college and then in graduate school, my curiosity burned. But as much as I longed to know his story, I respected his privacy and silence and never dared to ask.



MARLA PALMER

One day, however — perhaps about ten or fifteen years ago — he asked me whether I thought it wrong that he did not speak of his experience to his daughters, who were by then well into adulthood. That was my chance to ask

him if he felt comfortable sharing his story with me, but at that point I didn't have the courage to do so. Thinking that it was the right thing to allow him to bury that part of his life, I told him that he had to do whatever was comfortable for him. This is now one of my greatest regrets. Miki is now almost 97 years old and has advanced dementia. It is too late to hear his story directly from him.

When I began my involvement with the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust four years ago and began immersing myself in Holocaust studies, the fact that I did not ask Miki to share his story with me began haunting me. I would have asked my cousin Lorraine, his wife — who knew more than anyone besides him — but she passed away in 2015 and took his secrets with her to her grave. Neither of his daughters knew very much about their father's story. We contacted the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum and several months later, a wealth of documents with Miki's name on them arrived. I feel it my duty now to tell his story, because his life and survival should be honored and remembered.

Miki was born on January 13, 1925 in what is now Berehove, Ukraine. At the time, it was part of Czechoslovakia. It appears that he was first deported to a ghetto called Uzhhorod in April of 1944 when he was 19 years old. A few days later, all Jews from the



Michael (Miki) and Lorraine Winkler met in 1950 in the Bronx and were married in 1953. Top left: Miki as young man in Ukraine. Bottom left: as a US Army soldier.

ghetto were forced into a brick factory and lumberyard outside the city, where they were confined with inadequate supplies of food and water. Soon the outbreak of epidemics provided the mayor with an excuse for deportations. The first transport left for Auschwitz on May 17, the fifth and last on May 31, 1944.

In May, Miki was transported to Auschwitz and was there, along with his father. Later they were transferred to Mauthausen, where they both survived until the camp was liberated by the Allies in April of 1945. One piece of information that my Cousin Lorraine did pass on to their daughters was that Miki and his father, Ignac (Irving), were miraculously able to remain together throughout their time in the camps. According to his daughters, at one of the train stations, Miki asked if he could remain with his father and the Nazi guard assented. At Mauthausen, they worked as slave labor building bombs for the Nazis in an underground war factory. Miki would cut hair for extra pieces of bread that he would then give to his father. Miki himself, at 5'10, weighed only 80 or 90 lbs. at liberation. His mother, Helen, and sister, Elizabeth, were annihilated by the Nazis. He

would never see them again. After spending some time in displaced person's camps in Melk and Ebensee (in Austria), he was able to emigrate to America on June 18, 1946. At some point, he and his father had been separated and found each other again after the war. This was featured in a New York paper and years later, after he had met



my Cousin Lorraine at the last Hungarian picnic in the Bronx in 1950, she saw this newspaper clipping in his scrapbook and remembered reading that article before they met! In February of 1952 he became a naturalized citizen of the United States, joined the U.S. Army, and began training for deployment during the Korean War before being honorably discharged due to persistent flashbacks. Lorraine and Miki were married in 1953.

Thanks to a bit of persistence and



the help of the USHMM, we were able to reconstruct some pieces of his journey, but it is only a snapshot of a much greater story. I can tell you where he was and the fact that he and his father survived the unimaginable, and that his mother and sister were not so fortunate. But there is much more to the story, including the part of his life that the Nazis could not destroy. Miki and Lorraine were married for 62 years and had a deep and enduring love for each other, as well as for their daughters, who they poured their whole lives into. They instilled in them the value of education from a very young age, and the fruit of this is evident in the fact that Helena graduated from Columbia University and then from graduate school at UC Berkeley, and Marcy graduated from Cornell and then from NYU Law School. Helena and Marcy are kind, compassionate, intelligent, successful, and strong women today—in large part, because of the gifts their parents gave them. The most amazing part to me, perhaps, is that Miki took all that suffering and made something beautiful of his life and of the lives of those entrusted to him. And so through this article, perhaps, I can help to honor his life, if only in a very small way. ■

Marla Palmer is a Greenville educator with MA in Modern European History and a cousin of a Holocaust survivor.

A Young Man Answering the “Call”

This is a story of politics, innocence and awakening in the 1930s and '40s in Nazi Germany — the innocence of a 19-year-old GI in 1944 and the awakening of a then-20-year-old GI in 1945.



A 1944 sketch of Warren Joseph Chamberlain

The setting starts with my dad, Warren Joseph Chamberlain joining the Massachusetts Army Guard while at Northeastern University in Boston. He was born in Columbus, Ohio on March 25, 1925, the only son of Alfred and Odille Chamberlain. The Massachusetts Army Guard had been established during the first World War as the 26th infantry division, better known as the Y.D. or Yankee Division. With the war heating up in Europe, the Y.D. was called up and sent to Fort Jackson, South Carolina for training and organization.



JOHN CHAMBERLAIN

Dad was assigned to the 101st infantry regiment company H and in August the Y.D. was sent to Camp Shanks in New York to be shipped over to France. In NY they boarded the Saturnia, an Italian luxury liner taken as a prize of war when the United States officially declared war on Italy and Germany. Dad landed in Cherbourg, France on September 7, 1944, where he volunteered for duty with the “Red Ball Express” a unit

formed to truck badly needed supplies to the front lines.

After a short stint driving for the “Red Ball,” it was off to combat in Nancy, France. When his company came under German mortar fire, dad was wounded and sent back to a hospital in England. Once recovered from his wounds, he was put back on the front line to fight through France, Belgium, Luxembourg, and Germany. On his 20th birthday, he crossed the Rhine River in pursuit of a rapidly retreating German army. The next month was spent cleaning up the SS and other die-hard troops.

In Schwarzenfeld, German, his company came across the bodies of hundreds of Polish Jews who had been murdered by the Nazis. Under the supervision of the Y.D. leaders, orders were given to respectfully handle the bodies and prepare for burial. All bodies were placed in wooden coffins and given a proper resting place.

From Germany, the 101st infantry regiment moved into Austria. On May 4, 1945, they assisted in the liberation of the Gusen concentration camp. Gusen was a sub-camp of Mauthausen camp and contained both Polish and Russian prisoners. It also housed a brothel which was used to reward “special” soldiers. Here is where dad witnessed the real tragedies of this war. Seeing bodies piled up like cordwood and enduring the sight of the walking skeletons, along with the overwhelming stench of death had a profound effect on him, for the rest of his life. After supervising the humane burial of the victims by the locals and the captured guards, the unit was moved into Czechoslovakia.



Polish and Russian prisoners were held at Gusen concentration camp in Austria.

May 7, 1945 — the war was officially over. After the end of the war all weapons were turned in and most troops were preparing to be shipped stateside. Dad volunteered to serve in Czechoslovakia assisting the Red Cross by transporting supplies back and forth across the Russian line and assisting with the care of displaced persons. He was issued a pass from General Eisenhower and was re-armed.

Dad had a memory that lived on with him. He recounted the following: One evening after supper, he was approached by a

newly-wed couple and it became clear that they wished to get out from behind what was soon to be the “iron curtain.” Despite the language barrier, my dad understood their desire and agreed to help. Ethnicity, nationality nor religious beliefs were important to him. He just needed to help them. So he went back up the hill to the hotel where he had dinner and acquired a bottle of vodka to be used as a bribe for the Russian guards. After stowing the couple away in the back of the deuce and a half he was driving (a two-and-a-half-ton truck) he drove them to freedom in American occupied Germany. Only the family of this young couple knows of their ultimate fate but they now were free from the postwar turmoil of 1945.

Today, perhaps we need to look back and study the events leading up to this tragic time in the history of the world. The rise to power of the Nazi and fascist governments and the imperialist ideology of the Japanese were primary causes of this genocide. Maybe now we will understand how truly fragile democracy was and continues to be.

My dad, Warren Joseph Chamberlain, was not a hero, just a young man answering the “call”. Dad became an adult during the war and was a caring, understanding and open minded person. Dad came home, and therefore I am. ■

John Chamberlain is the business owner of Casual Living and son of a Gusen Concentration Liberator.



Above and left: Warren Joseph Chamberlain with Russian soldiers

Successful Escape from Germany to American Success

My father, born as Manfred Reichenberg on July 20, 1912, was the sixth generation of his family to live in the same house in the Hessian village of Windecken, Germany. The picturesque village of 4,000 souls was 650 years old, complete with a small castle. Jews comprised about 10 percent of the population. The synagogue and cemetery were about 500 years old. Relations between Christians and Jews were excellent into the early 1930s, then gradually deteriorated over that decade. Those Jews who did not leave by 1940 were sent to a camp in France, starved, and later murdered.

Manfred's father, Salli, was a decorated WWI combat veteran. His mother's family had owned a dry goods and furniture shop

near the main square for generations. Dad's earliest memory was his first day of first grade in the autumn of 1918. The class was instructed to tear the Kaiser's picture out of each textbook.

The eighth grade was followed by two years of apprenticeship, for my father it was in clothing sales in Frankfurt. He sold clothing in a shop in Grossen-Linden, south of Giessen. In 1937, five or six SA (*Sturm-Abteilung*, Assault Division) "Brownshirt" thugs from the neighboring village waited for him outside. As he left to deliver a coat, they beat him with blackjacks. He thought they would murder him, so he told them to hang him "one-and-half meters high, so you won't have to bow down to kiss my ass." He suffered lifelong damage to his ears, headaches, and other issues. The local doc-



Fred Bergen at Charlotte Merchandise Mart, 1981.

tor, a Nazi party member, refused to believe he was attacked or treat his injuries.

In the 1930s, Nazi policy was expulsion of Jews. But no Western country wanted refugees, especially the US. One hurdle in the immigration law was a requirement for an affidavit from an American proving the ability to financially care for the refugee, if needed. Interestingly, in 1902, 15-year-olds Salli Reichenberg and Herman Stern were apprenticed to a clothing store for three years. There was a "high fee" for early departure, more than either boy's family had. A year later, a family friend who owned a department store in North Dakota sought an employee for his expanding business who might also be a marriage prospect for his wife's sister. Salli helped Herman flee.



Windecken village square depicted in 1910. Our family house and shop was a few hundred feet from this scene. In the 1980s, the government assisted in having the plaster removed from 17th century houses, exposing half-timber structures.

Herman did marry the sister, inherited the chain of stores, and was a wealthy civic leader and friend of ND Senator Nye. With Nye's help, Herman vouched for over 100 relatives, saving most. He repaid Salli with the youthful escape of Manfred, my dad.

Manfred took a train to Hamburg and then sailed 3rd class, departing April 30, 1937, and arriving in New York on May 8. Manfred worked as a custodian in a Brooklyn hospital and sold life insurance door-to-door. He married Ilse on December 25, 1942, just before reporting to Camp Gordon for Basic Training and initial unit training. While there, he became a U.S. citizen in the Augusta courthouse, "reborn" as Fred M. Bergen. He never spoke about his 1930s Germany experiences.

Dad served as a Sergeant First Class in the 239th Engineer Construction Battalion in New Guinea and the Southern Philippines campaigns, earning Purple Heart and Bronze Star medals. He served in the Pacific Theater for 24 months and was honorably discharged on January 26, 1946.

The family moved to Charlotte in 1949. For three decades, Fred Bergen sold men's clothing to almost every department store, dry goods store, men's clothing store, and PX/BX in South Carolina, when those were locally owned independent stores. Twice yearly, he worked in nearly every city and town in the state.

In 1988, his home village celebrated its 700th anniversary and invited back



Tech Sgt Fred Bergen in the Philippines, 1945.

surviving Jewish citizens, as it was also the 50th anniversary of the destruction of the village's synagogue and Jewish shops. Thirty- one former citizens were treated to a week of welcoming speeches, receptions, and tours. What really induced many to return was an emotional Q&A session with a group of high school students, grandchildren of the Nazi generation. Near the conclusion, one kid pointed out "they look like our grandparents, only shorter. They speak the same [pre-TV] local dialect." While there, three former Hanau school-mates invited Dad to lunch. He learned nearly all his Christian classmates died fighting in Russia during WWII.

Meanwhile, Dad lived to the age of 77, married for 47 years, with two sons and two grandchildren. He was forever grateful to find a welcome home in the Carolinas. Dad died in Charlotte, NC on December 26, 1989. ■

Les Bergen is a Citadel alumnus retired from staff of Headquarters, U.S. Army. His wife, Jane Banov Bergen, served 34 years in office of Sen. Fritz Hollings.



LES BERGEN



From left: Jeff Bergen, Helen Sundheimer (maternal grandmother), Jane Banov, Les Bergen, Ilse and Fred Bergen. Taken at Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim synagogue in Charleston, 1972.

An Application of Intelligence: David Toren's Story

This piece was originally published in Holocaust Remembered, Vol. 4 in 2017.

David Toren's 1939 escape to Sweden from the German city of Breslau (now Wroclaw) on the *Kindertransport* separated him from his older brother, Hans Peter. While David took refuge in Sweden, Hans Peter had

gone ahead, arriving in England one day before World War II began. The Toren parents had information on David's whereabouts, but did not know where their firstborn was.

At age 14, David cleverly devised a ploy that got

From my reference my parents knew Leister was the town my brother was in and were able to figure out the rest."

More than seven decades later, Toren still cherishes his father's responding letter of praise, calling him smart for such an application of intelligence. He also remembers the long and troubling train ride from his native Germany to an unknown Sweden, a trip during which the teenage boy held on his lap someone's baby, entrusted to him. As the train rumbled across Europe, he reflected on the life being left behind.

"In our community, it was my father who organized the *Kindertransport*. The seat I took had been promised to a friend who had left our community with his family, destined for the Dominican Republic." Toren explained that country's then-president, Rafael Trujillo, believed

accepting German Jews who had professional credentials would help improve the intellectual fiber of the country.

The exodus of both brothers took place in 1939, Toren said, "... and my parents were still alive. They were killed March 4, 1943, in the gas chambers at Auschwitz."

Toren managed to hang onto the iconic encyclopedia through tumultuous war times, followed by international moves, service in the Israeli military and, eventually, immigration to the United States. Unfortunately, he cannot show readers what that reference book looked like.

"I kept it with me all those years," explained Toren, who at age 90 still holds sway at the Manhattan law firm on whose letterhead his name is listed. Throughout his professional life, he practiced intellectual property law.

"The Knaur Encyclopedia was in my office on the 54th floor, North Tower, World Trade Center on 9/11, the day Bin Laden struck."

Toren has emerged on the international news scene in recent years because of his successful lawsuit against Germany



for the return of Nazi-looted art work for which he produced indisputable proof of heirship. A Max Liebermann painting, *Two Riders on the Beach*, was one of 306 art items stolen from Toren's great-uncle, and has been only one of a few works of art returned to rightful heirs.

Toren resides in Manhattan. He has new legal claims in motion against Germany for the return of the other 305 works of art and porcelain stolen from his family.



RACHEL MONTGOMERY HAYNIE (OBM)



information past Nazi censors, tipping his parents off as to Hans Peter's location. For his ploy, he turned to an encyclopedia. "I knew we both had copies of a single volume encyclopedia published by Knaur. I told my parents in a letter: 'I do not want to forge German, so I am memorizing it, going entry by entry in the encyclopedia. I am now up to Leibzins.' My father realized something was hidden in that message. The next entry was Leister, a university town in England.



Above: New Yorker David Toren feels a replica of the Max Liebermann painting the Nazis stole from his family. Columbia artist Christian Thee created the copy, below, in bas relief so Toren, who is blind, can feel it. Bottom left: Toren is barely distinguishable in the only childhood photo of him that survived World War II.

Justice and Blindness: Not Mutually Exclusive

The rightful return of the Toren Basketweavers painting

This piece was originally published in Holocaust Remembered, Vol. 6 in 2019.

The 2017 issue of *Holocaust Remembered* included an article regarding Manhattan attorney David Toren, stripped of his sight by shingles in 2007. The timeline on that article began with Toren, a pubescent boy, escaping on the last *Kindertransport*, departing his hometown, Breslau, Poland, now known as Wrocław.

More than seven decades later, injustices attendant to the Holocaust continued haunting him, now a keen-minded lawyer. Along with the international art world, he was rocked by the 2013 discovery of a trove of Nazi-looted art, horded and obscured for years in the Munich apartment of the reclusive son and heir of an unscrupulous Nazi-associated art dealer.

Toren's European agent, who had long been searching for art pilfered by Nazis, notified his Manhattan client he had just seen the Max Liebermann painting, *Two Riders on a Beach*, on television. The oil was one of only a few confiscated pieces shown at a news conference as examples from the art raid.

Toren's photographic memory enabled him to thumb through law books he could no longer see. Several fruitless initiatives later, he found a legal loop and filed suit against the Republic of Bavaria for the return of the painting. Along with grit and determination, patience characterized Toren's tenacious legal maneuvers.

Forced justice prevailed in the painting's return. Family justice prevailed in the disposition of the painting. His brother, the only other family member to survive the Holocaust, also was heir to the painting — and he had heirs. Toren would not be able to see the evocative painting. To achieve family justice, the decision was made to sell the painting. By the time the gavel came down at Sotheby's of London, his brother had died leaving daughters to share in the proceeds from the painting's sale — close to \$2.5 million.

It had been Toren's distinctive recall of details, from his youth and from his law books, that helped connect the dots leading to the just return of the Liebermann. Equally vivid was his recall of other paintings, as well as ceramics and ivories, in the valuable collection then owned by his great



Max Liebermann, *The Basketweavers*

uncle David Friedmann, a wealthy Breslau industrialist.

Once again, Toren virtually thumbed through the law books with which he was so familiar, ferreting out — from memory — a legal precedent with which he might bring a new suit against Germany for the other art stolen.

Like *Two Riders on a Beach*, another vividly-recalled piece was also by Max Liebermann. *The Basketweavers* depicts five Dutch boys weaving straw into baskets.

Deduction coupled with research, with which he had help, formed Toren's conclusion the painting was in Israel, not Germany.

He was right.

And as it turned out, the unaware owner of *The Basketweavers* also was a Holocaust survivor. The painting had only been in his possession since 2000; he purchased it at auction in Berlin for 130,000 euros (\$139,000.)

When the Israeli learned the emotional story surrounding the painting, he could no longer look at it. His attorney, Meir Heller of Jerusalem, told international news media, "This caused him great turmoil; it retroactively sullied the artwork."

Time and attorneys' negotiations resulted in a solution.

Toren said, "*The Basketweavers* now hangs in my son's living room. I bought it back from the Israeli," who donated his

proceeds to aid needy survivors, Toren learned.

Now 91, Toren is legally pursuing the return at least 50 more works of art. His proof of provenance is a detailed inventory, penned by the Nazis who looted his great-uncle's collection in 1939.

"I have recently been notified of Germany's Motion to Dismiss," said Toren, who does not give up this easily. ■

Rachel Montgomery Haynie "Bunny" (March 24, 1940-July 23, 2018) was a local freelance writer, a community connector and a patron of the arts. She wrote for a number of local publications always highlighting the history and art of the Midlands. Rachel was also a prolific author of several published historical biographies.

Treasured Holocaust Survivor Recipes



LYSSA HARVEY AND
RACHEL BARNETT

Food can tell a story. Delicious aromas, the taste of a savory dish, or a china pattern used for a holiday dinner can elicit memories. These special memories around the table and in the kitchen can take us back to a particular time and place that define a moment in history for us. Families recipes and cookbooks hold a special place for many. They are family treasures. A well-loved frayed cookbook and handwritten recipes passed down from one generation to the next helps us remember.

For Holocaust survivor families, memory of food or a recipe can be part of their shared legacy. Actual handwritten recipes and family cookbooks may not have survived the horrors of World War II's Holocaust. But memory serves as a necessary replacement for these family treasures that have been lost.

There are collections of Holocaust survivor recipes archived by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum. The museum reports three key facts about their collection of recipes.

During the era of the Holocaust, cookbooks and recipes were among the precious items people took with them during emigration.

Recipes were also created in hiding or secretly in camps and ghettos by people who were starving or suffering from malnutrition.

Others were compiled after the war in displaced persons camps as survivors sought to rebuild their lives.

Also, according to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Holocaust Encyclopedia webpage "Cookbooks and food in general reflect who we are, preserving recipes from relatives and passing them on to future generations to keep memories alive. Each cookbook or recipe in the Museum's collection tells a story. They evoke memories of happier times and bear witness to the will to create under the most dire of circumstances. In some cases, cookbooks were even ways of preserving a past that the Nazis and their collaborators were rapidly destroying."

Kugels & Collards, a Southern Jewish Food blog from Historic Columbia's Jewish Heritage Initiative has been collecting food stories from Columbia's Jewish Community over the last three years. The purpose is to archive and remember Columbia Jewish history, and also celebrate the joy that food brings us. Food connects us and weaves a colorful tale of collaboration of communities. In spite of our differences, food stories bring us together and help us remember the past. The remarkable survivor stories and recipes honor Columbia Holocaust survivors Cela Miller (OBM), Bluma Goldberg, and Jadzia Stern (OBM) and can be found in Kugels & Collards: kugelsandcollards.org. ■

Rachel Barnett and Lyssa Harvey of Columbia South Carolina are the creators of Historic Columbia's Jewish Heritage Initiative food blog and upcoming book Kugels & Collards, a joint project of Historic Columbia and the Jewish Historical Society of Society. The blog explores Southern Jewish Food stories and recipes at kugelsandcollards.org. If you would like to share your southern Jewish food story contact: jhssc2020@gmail.com.

Recipes shared from Kugels & Collards: kugelsandcollards.org.



Good friends enjoy dinner together at the Elite Epicurean in Columbia. Around the table from left: Cela Miller, Bluma Goldberg, Felix Goldberg, Ben Stern, Jadzia Stern and David Miller, circa 1960.

In Loving Memory of Cela and David Miller

kugelsandcollards.org/blog/2020/1/10/in-loving-memory-of-cela-amp-david-miller



Cela Miller

Sponge Cake

Cela Tysgarten Miller

10 eggs separated
1 1/2 cups sugar
3/4 cup matzo cake meal
3/4 cup potato starch
6 oz. orange juice
Fresh strawberries, optional

Add sugar to beaten egg yolks. Combine cake meal and potato starch. Add cake meal mixture to egg yolks. Add orange juice and beat.

In separate bowl, beat the 10 egg whites until stiff peaks form. Fold this into the meal mixture.

Place in an ungreased tube pan. (Do not grease pan as it will ruin the cake.) Bake about 50 minutes at 325 degrees.

After removing from the oven turn cake upside down in pan to cool. Allow to cool for a couple hours.

Serve with fresh berries and whip cream, optional.



Cela Miller's story and recipes have also been featured in a cookbook *Miracles and Meals, Volume II of the Holocaust Survivor Cookbook* by Joanne Caras and her family. Caras's books honor Holocaust survivors through their testimonies and recipes.



Jadzia Sklarz Stern

The Soup Lady: The Amazing Talents of Jadzia Sklarz Stern

kugelsandcollards.org/blog/2018/8/14/the-soup-lady-the-amazing-talents-of-jadzia-sklarz-stern

Recipe of Creplach

(makes about 70-75)

As recited by Jadzia Stern during High Holy Days

and typed by Linda Cherry Stern

5lbs all purpose flour
4lbs hamburger meat
2lbs onion

Water has to be boiling so they don't stick to the bottom. You will need to change water after boiling around 20-30 creplach because they will start to stick.

Dough / per cup of flour

1 egg
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 tablespoon water
1 cup flour

Beat egg, add salt and water. Add flour gradually and knead to a smooth loaf until it does not stick to the hand. Cut in half and roll out into a round or square. Cut into 4 strips down and across.

Filling

Use chopped meat — any leftover cooked roast that has been chopped very finely. For about 1.5-2 pounds of meat, add: 1-2 eggs to hold hold together, 1.5 tsp. salt, .5 tsp. pepper.



A Filler-Stern High Holy Day meal in Columbia, circa 1990.

Sauté the onions in schmaltz (rendered chicken fat) until clear before mixing with the meat.

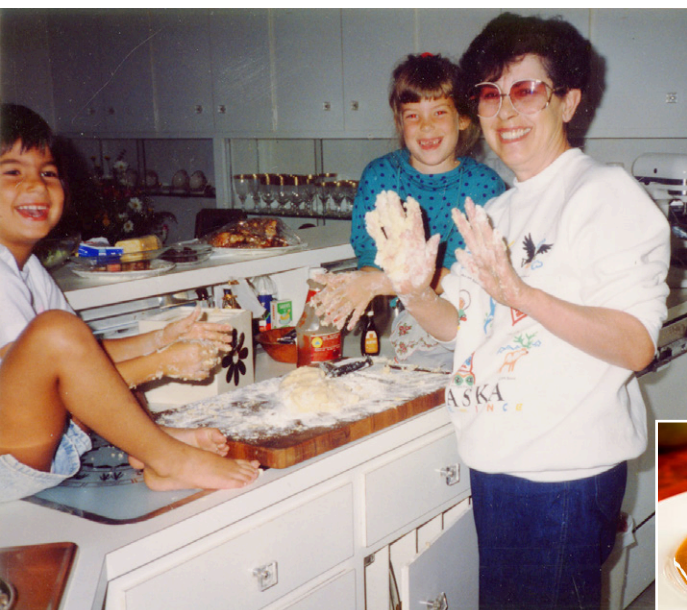
Fill squares and fold 3 cornered. Pinch together and close. Bring point up together to form like a cup. Boil large pot of water with a little salt added to water and drop creplach in and cook for 15 minutes or until they float to the top. This makes 30 and will fit into a large white enamel soup pot. To bake — 350 degrees, brush with chicken fat until light brown.

Chicken Soup

Baking hen (NOT a chicken or roaster)
Leeks (1 large)
Carrots (6-8 large)
Celery (4-6 stalks)
Fresh Parsley and or Dill
Osem Consomme, seasoning mix
3-4 tablespoons
1-2 tablespoons of salt, pepper to taste

Clean hen and salt well. Boil 2-3 quarts of water and then add the hen. Bring to boil again and skim the fat and such off the top. Cover and boil for about 1-2 hours depending on size of hen. Clean and chop the leeks, carrots, celery and parsley or dill.

Before adding the vegetables, add 3-4 tablespoons of Osem seasoning mix and salt and pepper to taste (may add more or less to taste). Slowly add all vegetables to soup, put on low and simmer for another 2 hours, covered. After cooking, cool soup and then refrigerate. Best if made at least 1 day prior to eating. Skim fat off the top of the soup and remove the hen before rewarming. If your family likes the chicken in the soup, take it off the bone or cut the cooked chicken into small serving sizes and leave it in the soup.



Bluma with her granddaughters, Rachel and Leah.

You are Going to Remember This

kugelsandcollards.org/blog/2019/8/16/you-are-going-to-remember-this

Bluma's Kugel

Bluma Tysgarten Goldberg

1 large bag extra wide egg noodles (16 oz)
1 large container cottage cheese (32 oz)
1 container sour cream (8 oz)
6 eggs

2 apples (prefer Macintosh)
2 sticks butter
6 tablespoons sugar
little cinnamon



Preheat oven to 325 degrees.

Butter the pan. Cook noodles. Drain noodles and place in bowl.

Slice 1 stick of butter and put in noodles. Slice apples thinly and in small pieces.

Then add cottage cheese, sour cream, apples, eggs, sugar, add cinnamon to taste.

Place the noodle mixture in the pan. Cut up the second stick of butter on top of the kugel. Cook until brown on top, approximately 45 minutes.

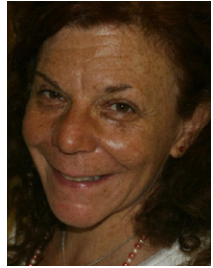


Bluma Goldberg

“I Will Cook So We Can Live”

In *Orchot Tzaddikim*, “Ways of the Righteous,” in English — a 15th century German book on Jewish ethics, it is written: “The wise man says: I will eat to live, and the fool says: I will live to eat.” While perhaps true on a certain level, these words have never really deterred me, an enthusiastic foodie from seeking out the next amazing restaurant.

But time passes, people change and in the last few months, I have found that these words have given me pause to consider the relationship between my beloved former mother-in-law, Bertha and her beloved Uncle Max.



RISA STRAUSS

Bertha is a Holocaust survivor. From Karlsruhe Germany, she, her brother, and parents were deported in

1940 to internment camps in the south of France. Bertha was 4 years of age and her brother Leo, 2. During the summer of 1942 the children were rescued by the OSE (*Oeuvre De Secours Aux Enfants*) and in September 1942 both parents were put on a transport to Auschwitz where they were immediately gassed.

On May 8, 1946, the children, and a group of other Jewish children who had lost their parents in the Holocaust arrived in New York by ship from Le Havre, France. Recha Reutlinger, their aunt — their Tanta became their legal guardian.

Uncle Max and Tante Hilde Fechenbach were deported in September of 1942 from Wurzburg, Germany to the Theresienstadt Concentration Camp with their children Walter (14 years) and Susanne (9 years). As if by a miracle, they survived in Theresienstadt for almost 3 years, although so many other prisoners perished.

So, how did Uncle Max and his family survive? Max was a chef. At the time of his deportation, he was working as a cook in a senior center — a nursing home of sorts. He was also a handicapped German Army vet, having lost a leg in WW1. Upon arrival at Theresienstadt, the SS aware of his occupation whisked him away to be named the camp chef for the Nazi soldiers.

After the war was over, like many German refugees before them, Washington Heights in Upper Manhattan in New York City became home for Bertha and Leo as



Bertha and her brother Leo at his Bar Mitzvah, 1950.

well as for Max and his family. The families were close, and Max became a father figure for both Bertha and Leo. Max was also able to continue working in his profession, the same job that saved his family from extermination in the camps. Max's position as chef at the Beth Jacob Home for the Elderly in the Bronx, supported the family for many years. It also honed his cooking skills. He would regularly prepare exquisite German dishes for the entire family. What he didn't realize was how much his young, orphaned niece, Bertha was observing him.

She watched, absorbed, and inhaled — his soups, his sauces, his roux, his chicken, and liver dishes, spatzle, beef rouladen, and



Passover dishes



Bertha walking down the aisle at her wedding with Uncle Max and her Tanta Recha on Feb. 16, 1957.

more. Even how he used his knives did not go unnoticed by the young gastronome. Bertha learned about food preparation, meal timing, presentation, and proper usage of plates, cutlery, and myriads of food gadgets. She assisted him in making traditional Passover dishes, food for the synagogue

and regular evening meals for the family. Bertha was present when Max prepared the platters for her brother Leo's Bar Mitzvah. And Max was there for her, to walk her down the aisle in her father's stead when she married her husband Walter Strauss in 1957.

Bertha, widowed for a few years, is now 86 years

old. She has 2 children and 4 grandchildren. Her gourmet talents are well known, appreciated, and devoured by her family, her synagogue — Hillcrest Jewish Center, Queens Region of Hadassah, and friends and family in Israel and around the world. Her cooking has changed over the years. Influenced by Kashrut laws, Bon Appetit, Gourmet Magazine, and numerous celebrity chefs. Even in 2022, a seat at Bertha Strauss' Passover Seder table is a hard ticket to come by. However, an extra chair will always be found, as there is always room for one more.

Uncle Max passed in 1976, but the impact he had on his nieces' life was considerable. What might their relationship have been had they not been living so closely together in the post WW2 refugee neighborhood. Was Uncle Max's mantra, “I will cook so we can live,” and “We live because I cook”? I

can only imagine the horror of feeding and preparing foods for Nazis while his family and the other prisoners ate rotten turnips. But with each morsel of food he made, he was able to bide his family a few more moments of precious life. Those horrible experiences suffered, became a nurturing force in Bertha's young life.

Writer, Abraham Avrunin wrote, “Eating is the best of prayers.” Bertha Strauss lived her post-Holocaust life by those words. Though starved as a little girl, Bertha turned that hunger into a fulfilling and creative artistic endeavor. Embracing Jewish traditions, and religious practices she shared her culinary creations with all those around her. By connecting the goodness of her past, and family roots with her present, Bertha was able to provide a wonderfully delicious future for her family. ■

Risa Strauss is the Beth Shalom Religious School Director, USC Hebrew Instructor, and 2019 Covenant Award Winner.

Is the History of the Holocaust Under Attack?

In October 2021, a startling statement was made by a district level administrator in a school district in Southlake, Texas. Caught on tape during a meeting with teachers, the administrator advised them to provide students with books that covered opposing perspectives of the Holocaust stating, "And make sure that if you have a book on the Holocaust, that you have one that has an opposing view, that has other perspectives." The administrator was referencing a new Texas law that required teachers to provide students with multiple perspectives when teaching controversial topics. Within a few days this administrator's statement, and the audio clip of it, had made national and international



**SCOTT
AUSPELMYER**

news. In response the school district quickly released a statement rebuking the administrator's remark, with the superintendent apologizing to his district and then stating, "We recognize that there are not two sides to the Holocaust."

The school district had recognized, albeit too late for them to avoid public condemnation, that to accept that there are two sides to the Holocaust is, in effect, a form of Holocaust denial. Yes, one may be justified in debating why the Holocaust happened, but one cannot challenge its existence. To suggest that there are "two sides to the Holocaust" is to encourage debate over the merits of its existence. This type of assertion provides a platform for Holocaust deniers to be heard alongside historians who have devoted their life's work to discussing the facts of the Holocaust or even worse to give a denier a platform to debate a Holocaust survivor, who is a living testament to the reality of this horrific event in human history.

Sadly, Holocaust denial or distortion, and the many forms it takes, is not something that only happens among those labeled by others as "ignorant" or only those who subscribe to particular political viewpoints. Much like the pervasiveness of negative or discriminatory

beliefs that continue to be harbored toward individuals of a variety of races, religions, and genders, Holocaust denial persists among all parts of a population regardless of socioeconomic status or educational levels across a wide ideological spectrum. The reasons for this can vary significantly by individual, but it is clear that there is one mechanism that is enabling misinformation to be spread widely to all segments of the population and that is social media.

In 2020 the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Agency conducted a 50 state survey on Holocaust knowledge of Americans and found that 49 percent of Americans under 40 years old were exposed to Holocaust denial or distortion across social media. In the summer and fall of 2020 the social media giant Facebook, which has almost 3 billion monthly active users worldwide, specifically came under intense scrutiny about allowing posts on Holocaust denial or distortion on its platform. As a result of mounting pressure Facebook issued a ban on these types of posts on its popular platform in October 2020, yet only three months later an investigation by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) that investigated a variety of online platforms found that Holocaust denial content remained on Facebook in January 2021. The ADL created an "Online Holocaust

ONLINE HOLOCAUST DENIAL REPORT CARD	
AN INVESTIGATION OF ONLINE PLATFORMS POLICIES AND ENFORCEMENT	
Twitch	B
Twitter	C
YouTube	C
TikTok	C
Roblox	C
Facebook (including Instagram)	D
Discord	D
Reddit	D
Steam	D

Source: www.ADL.org



SCCH Summer Institute teachers collaborating on a project.



South Carolina Council on the Holocaust Summer Institute teachers discuss the Holocaust memorial in Memorial Park in Columbia.

Denial Report Card" and Facebook rated a D for the effectiveness of its approach in combatting Holocaust denial or distortion on its platform.

While the challenges of combatting online Holocaust denial and distortion, including that on social media, are daunting, experts have already begun creating ways to address these challenges. Within the past year the United Nations and UNESCO convened an advisory group meeting on Holocaust denial and distortion and with the help of the World Jewish Congress are developing educational resources to improve Holocaust education and responses to the issues of Holocaust denial and distortion. As detailed on UNESCO's website these efforts include "aims to map and raise awareness of contemporary trends of Holocaust denial and distortion and to strengthen educational approaches, pedagogies, and good practices that help to counter its transmission online and in society."

In addition to the work of large international organizations like the United Nations and UNESCO it is important to remember that there are hundreds of Holocaust organizations around the world dedicated to the cause of promoting Holocaust education in their communities. The Association of Holocaust Organizations (AHO) has over 370 members that meet regularly to discuss the latest scholarship in the field as well as to work collaboratively to develop educational programs that can provide important training for teachers and resources for students in states,

counties, and school districts throughout the United States.

The South Carolina Council on the Holocaust is one of the member organizations of the AHO and we continue our dedicated efforts to provide quality professional development opportunities for SC teachers. Our efforts assist teachers in navigating an important historical topic that is clearly addressed in our state's standards for education. Each year we offer two week long summer institutes for teachers, two one day conferences, online and in-person seminars, and many other professional development opportunities to engage teachers in learning more about the Holocaust and how to teach it appropriately to their students. The SCCH is committed to fulfilling our vision of helping South Carolinians recognize the relevance of the Holocaust and human rights, apply it within their own lives, and work for the improvement of our society. ■

Scott Auspelmyer is the Executive Director of the South Carolina Council on the Holocaust and has 20 years of experience teaching high school social studies in South Carolina.

South Carolina Council on the Holocaust Members

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GREENVILLE JEWISH FEDERATION
Yom HaShoah
Commemorating the Lessons of the Holocaust
and Remembering the Children
Celebrating the Butterfly Project

Wednesday, April 27 | 5:30-7 p.m.

Congregation Beth Israel
Greenville



The Butterfly Project's wings spread far and wide by participating in Yom HaShoah. Greenville Jewish Federation is providing an evening of remembrance as we gather the Jewish community to participate in Southern NCSY's Holocaust Memorial Project.



Yom HaShoah: Holocaust Remembrance Day

The Holocaust was the largest manifestation of antisemitism in recent history. Yom HaShoah reminds us of the horrors that Jews and other persecuted groups faced. Many commemorate Yom HaShoah by lighting yellow candles to keep alive the memories of the victims.

Temple Sinai Jewish History Center

invites you to light a candle on

Thursday, April 28 | 1-4 p.m.
in memory of these victims.

11 Church St., Sumter
sumtercountymuseum.org



Charleston Jewish Federation's REMEMBER Program Presents

2022 Yom HaShoah

Turning Memory To Strength

May 1, 2022 at 2:00 PM

Charleston Holocaust Memorial | Marion Square

We will join together as a community to honor our local survivors and their descendants, remember those we lost in the Holocaust, and begin to understand the Shoah through multi-generational perspectives. Together, we will keep the memory of those senselessly murdered in the Holocaust alive.



Free and open
to the entire
community



Honor Our
Local Survivors
and their families



Remember the 11
million who perished
in the Holocaust

Visit jewishcharleston.org/remember to learn more
about, or donate to, the REMEMBER Program.



The Jewish Federation
of Charleston, SC
THE REMEMBER PROGRAM

Columbia Holocaust Education Commission's Annual
YOM HASHOAH COMMEMORATION:
A Day to Remember

Sunday, May 1, 2022 | 22 Shevat 5782
5 p.m. | Tree of Life Congregation, Columbia



Bernice Lerner

Join us as we respectfully honor the memory of the six million Jewish victims. Dr. Harris Pastides, current president of the University of South Carolina, and Dr. Doyle Stevik, Executive Director of the Anne Frank Center at USC will briefly speak about their herculean efforts to successfully establish the center at the university.

The featured speaker, Dr. Bernice Lerner, will tell her mother's story of survival from Bergen-Belsen, the same concentration camp where Anne Frank perished. Her new book "All the Horrors of War" answers the questions of how, against all odds, her mother survived.

Bernice Lerner is the author of several writings on the Holocaust and on virtue ethics. She is the former Dean of Adult Learning at Hebrew College, former lecturer on the Holocaust at Boston University, and a senior scholar at Boston University's Center for Character and Social Responsibility.

With Our Sincere Thanks and Gratitude

To our Contributing Authors: A special thank you goes to all of the authors who spent countless hours researching and writing this historical narrative.

To our Survivors, Liberators, and Eyewitnesses: To the individuals and to the families, we have the deepest respect and gratitude.

You have all spoken and written about a very difficult time in your life and we are deeply thankful that you shared your stories.

Only by hearing your life testimonies, can we continue to tell the stories and battle those that wish to "rewrite history."

We must never forget the Lessons of the Holocaust and through these stories the lessons will live.

To the Post & Courier papers, the McClatchy papers and the Gannett papers: We are so thankful that you have continued to see this as a worthwhile project and worked with us to bring this to the communities of South Carolina.

Thank you to Chase Heatherly and especially to Lisa Willis of Free Times who has spent many hours bringing the stories to life on the pages.

You have provided the vehicle to reach the public and we have provided you with amazing personal and historical stories on the Holocaust.

**Thank You to
Our Supporters**



**South Carolina
Council on
the Holocaust**

**Anita
Zucker
Family**



Columbia Jewish Federation

THE STRENGTH OF A PEOPLE.
THE POWER OF COMMUNITY.