

opportunities and career openings and provided every encouragement to do so - along avenues you were denied but dearly wished to enter. Their levels of success speak for you. And now you are enriching your lives through those of your grandchildren.

Professor Shamai Davidson of Shalvata Hospital in Israel was specially interested and deeply concerned in your welfare. Was it he who noticed how so many of your children, far more than in their peer group, are actively concerned with Human Rights issues? Your generation has entrusted them to keep alive knowledge of what the Nazi machine attempted to do, how far it went, the atrocities that were committed that took six draining years by the Allies to extinguish. It is a heavy commitment. The International Holocaust Survivors Gathering in July had as its sub-title: Remembering for the Future. The Holocaust in an Age of Genocide. In one of the small discussion groups on that day it was one of The Boys who said it all: our duty is to fight for universal Human Rights.

I feel privileged to be a member of your Society and to have shared some of your joys and sorrows. Your strengths and achievements provide living evidence to the rest of us that good can triumph over evil.

Post Script,

My most recent involvement with child survivors continues today. It happened like this. Bertha's sister-in-law, Lily Peleg, introduced to me Olga Solomon, a Mengele twin and another Slovakian child survivor. Since then I have been slowly tracing members of her group and collecting their stories. They were the last to be brought by Rabbi Solomon Schonfeld from Europe before the Iron Curtain dropped. They came from Bratislava and, like some of you, via Prague to these shores in 1948. The majority spent up to a year at Clonyn Castle in southern Ireland before dispersing to Israel, North America and Britain. They had their very first reunion in 1998. By then we had found addresses for about half the original 148. Should you happen to come across anyone from this group, do refer them to me.

Recollections

AFTER THE HOLOCAUST 1945 - GOING FORWARD

By Michael Novice M.Sc Ph.D (Majer Sosnowicz)

I have the dubious privilege of having had a full measure of the Second World War. The War started for me on Friday, September 1st 1939, and ended only with my liberation on May 8th 1945, the very day of the end of the war, the capitulation of Germany to the Allies, when I was liberated by the Russian Army in Terezin (Theresienstadt).

Since my intention is to reminisce on post war years, I will simply summarise my war experiences by the following notes:

I lived with my family in Warsaw from birth (1927) until 1941. The last two years included misery and starvation in the Ghetto. Soon after the start of the bombing of Warsaw our block of apartments at 18, Zamenhof Street was damaged and we had to live with a cracked external wall for the rest of our stay in Warsaw. From 1941 I lived with relatives in Ostrowiec until the town's deportation in 1943. In Ostrowiec I worked at the local iron works, the Herman Goring Eisenhutte. The ironworks existed in that town for many years, but was renamed by the Germans. Because the product they made was of importance to the German war machinery, a group of us were allowed to stay after the town deportation. I continued to work in Ostrowiec until 1944.

Briefly, the rest of my war experience was as follows:

- Mid-1944 I was transported from Ostrowiec to Auschwitz/Buna Fabrik.
- January 1945, after liquidation of Auschwitz, transported to Buchenwald.

- End of April 1945, transported to Terezin.
- May 8th 1945, liberated at Terezin by the Russian Army.

After the liberation, while still in Terezin, I was taken to a local hospital for treatment of pleurisy and treated by Russian military doctors. On release from the hospital my attention was drawn to a group of survivors who were qualified to go to England because of their young age. I became part of a group of 732 youngsters who went to Windermere in the English Lake District.

Soon after my arrival at Windermere, while playing a game of soccer, I felt unwell. The local resident camp doctor diagnosed my illness as tuberculosis (TB) and arranged for my transportation to a sanatorium. On arrival at Westmoreland Sanatorium, north of Windermere, I met two other boys from the Windermere camp, Marcus Klotz and Sam Dresner. There we received good care by nurses and doctors. In particular, I remember a kind Irish nurse and a doctor-in-charge. If my recollection, after 54 years, is correct, the doctor was Jewish, Dr Frankel, from Vienna. Dr Frankel wore a grey goatee beard and always wore a white coat, stethoscope and had great sympathy for us. Speaking in German, he consoled us by comparing our lot with that of the biblical figure of Job (or Iyyov in Hebrew). At that time my knowledge of the suffering of Job was scant, since my formal education stopped at age 12, so I was not really sure what he was trying to tell us.

In the spring of 1946, the Committee for the Care of the Children from the Concentration Camps (C.C.C.C.), who were responsible for us, arranged for Marcus, Sam and myself to be transferred to the Sanatorium in Ashford, Kent. There, a larger group of sick boys and girls from the Windermere transport were already being treated.

In that sanatorium I met a kind and devoted lady, Sister Maria Simon, who became a friend, mentor and great help to me for many years. Her origins were from Germany. It was she who introduced me to the music of Johannes Brahms, her special affection. Sister Maria was assisted by several people, some of whom were also holocaust survivors, known as counsellors, but who were older than most of the boys. Among these was Erna Regent who, after leaving England for Israel and subsequently for the USA, continued her friendship with me for the next 48 years. Sadly, she died in 1995 at the age of 75, leaving children and grandchildren.

While in Ashford we received lessons in English and other subjects by a resident teacher whose name was, I believe, Mr Engelhart. We affectionately dubbed him 'Mr Teacher'. I still have a photograph of him with a group of boys on a bus outing from Ashford to Folkestone or Dover where he took us periodically, both places being easily accessible by bus.

In 1946, the group from Ashford was transferred to an old mansion house in the village of Ugly, identified by the Post Office as: 'Near Bishops

Stortford' in the county of Hertfordshire. The mansion was known as *Quare Mead* and was converted to a convalescent home for our use.

Sister Maria continued to be in charge at *Quare Mead* for the next two years. The responsibility for food preparation was in the hands of a couple whose name escapes me after all these years, but I do know that they were a well-educated pair from Germany. They were succeeded by Mr and Mrs Binder. The cooking was done on a big coal-burning oven-range because there was no connection to gas mains, nor was there a major supply of electricity.

Bob, a local Englishman, was a maintenance man who had the duty of maintaining the batteries that operated our electric lights. This series of batteries eventually became obsolete when we were connected to the supply grid. Bob also acted as driver and gardener. Where gas was needed we used 'calor gas', which was supplied in big bottles. 'Max', an older holocaust survivor, worked as a general factotum. Additionally, there was Mr Lapidus, who helped us 'get on our feet'. Mr Lapidus was a teacher who hailed from Dublin, Ireland, and succeeded Mr Engelhart. He inspired many of us to educate ourselves and to develop interests and make a place for ourselves in society. One of the things I remember about him was that occasionally, when he took us to the movies in Bishops Stortford, the movies ended after the last bus had departed for Ugly. Mr Lapidus solved our dilemma of getting home by leading us on a five-mile walk! His special art was to play the piano beautifully without referring to musical notes. Although Tzvi was not a holocaust survivor, he did need *Quare Mead* to recuperate from some illness. He had a Leica camera with which he took pictures, which he developed and printed himself on the premises. These photos provided us with records of places and faces from *Quare Mead* as mementos.

In 1949, Eva Minden took over Sister Maria's duties. Some twenty years later she wrote a book on our life in *Quare Mead - The Road Back*, by Eva Kahn-Minden. (This book is available from Michael Novice, 2280 Elkhorn Court, San Jose, CA 95125, USA).

As could be predicted, the C.C.C.C. had limited financial means and expected the healthy boys to start making a living for themselves as soon as possible. However, the residents of *Quare Mead* were expected to find employment only after the doctor had discharged them as fit to work.

There was a spiritual leader who came to visit *Quare Mead* periodically, Rabbi Eli Munk of Golders Green, London. During one of his visits he suggested to me that I continue my formal education with a view of taking my 'matriculation'. Sister Maria reinforced this suggestion. I decided to take their advice. It so happened that at that time I heard of another one of 'our boys' who had just passed that same exam successfully, Jerry Herzberg. Although I had never met Jerry, his achievement gave me much encouragement. Later, when we both lived in Belsize Park, we became good friends, a friendship that continues to this day.

Because, for medical reasons, I had to stay in *Quare Mead*, this study could only be undertaken by a correspondence course. I decided to present myself for the matriculation in January 1948 and, since I started the course in spring of 1947, I had only nine months to complete the course, an intensive nine months of study. English and Mathematics were compulsory, Polish, German and Physics were elective subjects, which completed the requirements of five subjects by the University of London. Since I was not yet familiar with the language, there was no 'study room' in *Quare Mead*, and the general ambience of the place was more geared to play than study. I found it quite hard to concentrate. An additional obstacle to concentration was the Holocaust was still so recent and still so much on my mind. Fortunately, the grounds were large and even in the social rooms I could sometimes isolate myself to study. Despite these obstacles, I passed the matriculation exam at first attempt, and continued with my studies for the Bachelors, Masters, and eventually Ph.D. degree.

The period of my matriculation exams still have vivid memories for me. To get to London, where the exams were

held, Mr Lapidus accompanied me on the trip. We arrived at the Primrose Club where we stayed for several nights by arrangements made by Sister Maria with Mr Yogi Mayer, who was in charge of the Primrose Club.

To get to the Halls of Imperial College where the exams were administered, we took the London Underground. Waiting there for the doors to open and the exams to start made my heart flutter with apprehension. Finally, the moment came, the doors opened and a surge of two hundred or more candidates entered the great hall. Many were still clutching pieces of paper with last minute notes which they thought might prove helpful in passing the exam. Each of us was directed to a numbered desk and given instructions on how to complete the papers. Pencils and scrap paper were provided in addition to the exam paper, because the candidate was permitted no materials relevant to an exam into the exam hall, in order to avoid cheating. Exams were held from 9am - 12 noon and from 2 - 5pm and continued for several days until all five subjects were covered.

To celebrate the completion of the exams, Sister Maria and Mr Lapidus took me to the Albert Hall to hear a concert of Brahms' *Violin Concerto* played by Yehudi Menuhin. While the concert marked the end of the exams, it was not the end of my apprehension. In England these exam results were not published for about six weeks or so, and thus, for that period of time I was constantly 'on spilkies' (pins).

Passing the matriculation exams gave me the interest to continue studying towards a profession. This required financial aid for which I had to apply to the JRC, via Mr Oscar Friedmann and Mr Leonard Montefiore for final approval. Mr Montefiore, affectionately known as 'Monty' was a very philanthropic person and very kind to us boys. He gave me the required permission to continue my studies, which I did, with the help of the JRC, at less than £2 per week, through my Bachelors degree. There were many other kind people who looked out for our welfare. More details on this subject can be found in Martin Gilbert's book *The Boys*.

My first paying job, in 1952, signified financial independence, a status that the C.C.C. welcomed. Further studies for an M.Sc. and Ph.D. Were completed while working. My first working position was in London. This was followed by a job in Chelmsford, Essex, then by a job in Bromley, Kent.

From there we moved to the United States in 1964, the time of the famous 'Brain Drain'. Our family, consisting of Ruth Minden (Eva's sister), whom I married in 1954, and our three children, Judith, Miriam and David, were brought to Elmira in upstate New York by Westinghouse Corporation. We lived in Elmira for twelve years. In 1975 my work took me to San Jose, California, where we still live, now in the 'state of' retirement after forty-one years of gainful work. In 1993 I retired and continue to live in the pleasant surroundings of San Jose, the 'Capital of the Silicone Valley'. We are fortunate to have the time and means to visit our three married children living on the East Coast quite frequently, and to enjoy our 'baker's dozen' grandchildren. Quite a change from life in Buna!

The grandchildren in turn are fortunate to experience, and play with, grandparents and know what it is to have this privilege, which our own children did not have.

We live a contented life, involved in communal work for our synagogue and wherever else we can be helpful.

Our thanks go to the Almighty for the great blessings he has bestowed on me in the second part of my life.

**Our tormentors
bragged that their
evil empire would
endure for
1,000 years**

But

**In our loneliness
He remembered us
And released us from
our tormentors
Give thanks to
Hashem, for his
kindness endures
forever
Psalm 136**