

# child survivors of the holocaust

# CONNECTIONS

VOLUME 1 NO.1

AUGUST 2013

## Introduction



To all Child Survivors, including existing members and newcomers to our group, welcome to the first edition of **CONNECTIONS**.

These past weeks since our notice was placed in the Australian Jewish News, asking Child Survivors to register their details for the

proposed submission to the Claims Conference, I have had the privilege of speaking with many of you and reading the heartfelt emails sent which told of your Holocaust experiences as children.

The list is being finalised and the number of Melbourne Child Survivors (250+) will be forward to Stefanie Seltzer, (World Federation President and Claims Conference delegate), for her meeting in New York.

The Child Survivor Group which is now part of the Jewish Holocaust Centre, will move forward and importantly with the dedicated support of the JHC, will continue into the future.

The only request of Child Survivors is to please support our endeavours by attending meetings when conveniently

possible and through the "Have Your Say" column in **CONNECTIONS**.

Your contributions, stories, comments and questions, will guide us to the issues that are important to you. Let us know your meaningful dates and anniversaries; we would be pleased to share these important occasions in our newsletter.

Email, write or call me personally:

Viv Parry

Child Survivors

Jewish Holocaust Centre

13-15 Selwyn Street

ELSTERNWICK VIC 3185.

Email: [childsurvivors@jhc.org.au](mailto:childsurvivors@jhc.org.au)

Tel: 03 9528 1985

To Child Survivors who may be facing difficulties with health and other issues at this time, we send you our caring thoughts and best wishes.

We hope you enjoy this edition of **CONNECTIONS**.

Look forward to hearing from you soon.

Kindest regards,

**Viv Parry**

**Chairperson, CSH Melbourne**

## Executive Director, Jewish Holocaust Centre



It is wonderful to see the new injection of vigour in the Child Survivors of the Holocaust group. Not only has Viv Parry brought new energy to the management committee, but Child Survivors themselves have reawakened their interest in the activities of this group. The JHC sees this group as the significant last connection to

the Holocaust. CSH gives the world a last opportunity to touch history and it is with a sense of comfort that more and more CSH are willing to take up the reigns that our

Survivors held since the inception of the Centre in 1984. The Centre, however much it needs the support of CSH, in turn supports CSH with inclusion in its many day and evening programs, and inclusion of events which are of interest to many members of the group. The Centre also provides the CSH committee with some accounting and administration support. The JHC looks forward to continuing its helpful lines of communication with CSH which were established by Henri Korn over his years of presidency, and looks to a bright future with your support.

**Warren Fineberg**  
**Executive Director**  
**Jewish Holocaust Centre**

## A Message as We Renew



It is never too late to renew. When almost a quarter of a century ago we first convened, we were in our 50's and 60's. We wondered even then whether it was not too late for us to renew ourselves. We looked at our elders in their 70's and 80's and we saw then as intractable and even as hindrances to our desire to flourish. But renew

and flourish we did.

Well, it is now we who are in our 70's and 80's. Again we wonder if we can renew and recharge.

We have achieved a lot since our inception, but changes have been variable and like life, sometimes uncertain.

Some changes nobody can take away from us. One is our identity as child survivors of the Holocaust and all that this entails. Nor can anybody take away our achievements as individuals, nor of our group as a whole. We tended each

other's wounds and loosened the chains that constricted us. And no one can take away the sense of siblinghood that we developed among ourselves.

When we started, the older generation wanted us to join them. This time we need the younger generation to sustain us. Our new leader is of the younger generation and she is devoted to our cause and needs. But it is up to us to guide her.

One last point. It is not too late for us to help her generation. That generation and subsequent generations need us as much as we need them. We should be open to their needs as much as to our own.

Our group, even in old age and depleted in number, is renewing itself. Let us celebrate and take advantage of this phase. And let us share the fruits of our rich journey with those who follow us.

**By Paul Valent**  
**Founding President**  
**Child Survivors of the Holocaust**

## Reply to Paul

Dear Paul,

When I asked for your assistance in providing an article for our first Newsletter, I imagined words that would be informative and thought provoking.

I never imagined your words would be such I would be moved to tears.

You are correct in all you have said about my needing to be supported in my endeavor to keep the Child survivors together as a group.

These past days after my advertisement appeared in the AJN and on line, I have been inundated with calls and emails.

Calls from Members whose names I have come to know from meetings, calling to make sure they were on the List and thanking me for caring about them.

Other emails and calls from people who had at last decided (prompted by the ad) to make a stand and be counted. "My husband said it would be taking 'blood money' and now he has gone I want to put my name down to record I was there!!" Was a common theme.

Husbands wrote for their wives, one asking if their wife was 'truly a Child 'survivor?' When I answered "Yes" the wife wrote back to me to tell me her story of years in hiding

and her ongoing fear of going into dark stairways.

All these people (thirty on Friday and even more these past 2 days) were still angry, upset, glad to speak out and grateful I was prepared to listen and express my deep sadness at their loss of childhood.

Yes, I truly know why I am working so hard for the Child survivors and with the assistance of Philip Maisel, Floris Kalman, Eva Marks, you Paul and the administration staff at the Jewish Holocaust Centre, I am hopeful my vision of a strong, engaged and enthusiastic group will emerge.

It is also true I did not have a "child hood" as such, the life I led prepared me to support and care for those who have lived through far worse than I have.

Your words have touched me deeply, I pray that the members will know I don't need their support to lick stamps and fold letters.

I need their understanding of why I want their group to go on: to allow the Child Survivors to continue to share their thoughts and to care for their own. I need them to come together... for all our sakes

Thank you

**Viv Parry**  
**Chairperson, CSH Melbourne**

## Testimonies Desk



Over the past twenty years, it has been my great privilege to watch the Child Survivors Group grow. When Paul Valent established the group, he offered much-needed guidance and support to a group of survivors whose sufferings were not fully understood or spoken about.

Positioned behind the camera lens, I was privy to the personal traumas and tragedies endured by each child survivor. What I witnessed was truly exceptional. Having recorded the meetings over the years, I realised the power a group of survivors harnessed in sharing their stories with others who had similar experiences growing up.

It was through this that the burdens which were placed on their shoulders at such an awfully young age were shared in the resilient hope that this might lighten the load for all. What emerged was an extraordinarily strong and supportive

community bound together by common experiences and a mutual understanding.

It is this enduring community-bond that I believe promises a bright future for the Child Survivors Group as it transitions into its current stage. With a strong emphasis on the members' own involvement in steering the group in the direction they wish to take it, the group should continue to respond and cater directly to the specific needs of its survivors. This will enable the renewing of the ties and friendships between members so that the group will continue to be a communal support system and social center for all child survivors.

I welcome any Child Survivor who wishes to give their testimony. Please call me at the Jewish Holocaust Centre to arrange a suitable time.

Kindest regards,

**Phillip Maisel OAM**  
**Head of Testimonies Department**  
**Jewish Holocaust Centre**

## Book Review: My Past is My Future by Henri Korn



This book follows "Saviours," the story of Henri's childhood and adolescence, recently reviewed in *The Voice*. This is more than his recollections; it is an insightful exposure of some of the myths surrounding the Holocaust. As he struggles to discover his identity, Henri unmask the truth about the Pope and his failure to intervene, Switzerland's spurious "neutrality" and the

appalling lack of action by the Red Cross. He begins this book with a lightness and joy which reflects the carefree life of his youth. By the age of nine, the reality of Germany's push to create a "Jew-free" empire begins to intrude on his life, plunging him into years of confusion and fear.

Henri and his younger sister are smuggled into Belgium

to join their father and, later their mother. Fresh threats in Belgium spur them to attempt escape to England via France. Their plan fails, forcing them to return to Belgium where they remain until the end of the War.

For the next three years they are assisted by a generous and kind Belgian who arranges papers for Henri's mother and keep his father in hiding. The children are sent to a refuge which puts a roof over their heads but little else. During their stay, the children are subjected to continuous anti-Semitic barrages, fed "starvation" rations and forced to wear the same unwashed clothes. They are made to work and attend church regularly.

Despite the hardships, deprivations and confusing life lessons, Henri acquires a range of skills that stand him in good stead for the rest of his life.

**Ruth Tang**  
**Jewish Holocaust Centre Volunteer – Library**

## Aged Care Support

Magali Kaplan from Jewish Care writes to tell Child Survivors about the "Home" services that Jewish Care provides.

You may be interested in Item 4: "Emergency Financial Assistance" for 'one off' Medical or Dental expenses, provided by the "Claims Conference Aged Care" program. The extensive list of programs provided includes, but is not

limited to:

### 1. **Keeping you Active and Healthy "Healthy Ageing" Program:**

Jewish Care's Healthy Aging Program provides flexible health and well being options for seniors in the Victorian Jewish community, including therapy services, social and personal support services, and day activity centre

services, such as respite. The service is generally offered at the Active Living Centre in Caulfield.

## 2. Home Care and Personal Care ("Blue Star" Program):

Jewish Care's "In Home" services are available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. These services include: house cleaning, shopping, personal care, respite care and transport to appointments.

## 3. Complex Case Management ("Keshet Program"):

This program delivers case management services to the elderly who have complex support needs and who require assistance to live independently in their own homes.

## 4. Emergency assistance for "one off" expenses ("Claims Conference Emergency Assistance Program for Holocaust Survivors"):

This program offers financial support to assist Holocaust survivors to meet the expenses of basic items of service including medical bills, medical equipment, dental treatment and other expenses.

For information regarding these services, and any applicable charges, Magali requests that Child Survivors contact: **Jewish Care Front Door Team** on **8517 5999**, to discuss your individual needs and answer any questions you may have regarding your requirements and circumstances.

## My Life... My Story



I just finished a semi-fictionalised story called "Once I was Alice" based on the story of "Alice in Wonderland". The 'Alice' of the book is forever influenced by what happened to her at age 10 or so. I very much relate to this. We both had traumatic experiences at this young age.

As for me, suddenly I found myself alone with my 6½ year old sister in hiding. It was OK till we were discovered and taken to the Budapest Ghetto on my 11th birthday. Survival was a full time occupation. Luckily I had a clear vision that we would survive. I had to save my little sister for my parents and I wanted to see a boy I fancied again.

While previously I, who was the plump one and ate all the ersatz food no one wanted, convinced myself that I was not hungry, so that I could feed every crumb to my sister without the feeling of hunger.

My mind was always racing ahead with survival. With a lot of help from above and people on the ground, we did.

When we reunited with our parents, they did not recognise

me.

This period of time was never talked about in our household. We left Europe behind and settled in Australia and got on with life. In order to succeed I worked from the age of 14½. By 15 we had our own wafer factory where I worked 2 shifts from 8.00am to 11.00pm. It was a success story. As in the "Alice" story I had 3 sons of whom I am very proud. When my family was young I talked about my story freely, even to my grandchildren.

One thing that was very beneficial to me was the group called 'Child Survivors of the Holocaust' where we all opened up and found kindred spirits.

My sons often ask "why can't you just be an Australian, after all you spent most of your life here?" My answer is the same as I gave to a lovely young German woman I just met in Israel recently. She kept saying "sorry" to me and I answered "Don't be sorry. Being a Holocaust survivor is what made me the person I am now. Strong, independent, successful, enjoying study, filling every day to the brim with the best things in life, and loving every minute".

**By Dita Gould**

## Personal Notices

Please call or email to let us know your important dates, anniversaries. We would be pleased to share these

meaningful occasions in our next edition of **CONNECTIONS**.

## Have your say

We welcome Child Survivor / Holocaust related articles, comments or questions. We will publish your contributions

in future editions of **CONNECTIONS**.

## Claims Conference

To All Child Survivors who contacted us by phone and email, we wish to advise that your names and details have been recorded on the Child Survivor List. We are in contact

with Stefanie Seltzer, Claims Conference Delegate, New York and will advise Child Survivors immediately we hear of any news regarding the Compensation Claim.

## The Ledger of Slonim

There is no definite date when the town of Slonim came into being. Records show that in the 11th century, a wooden fortress named Slonim was built on the left bank of the Schara River. According to the Polish historian Dlugash, a battle broke out in 1040 in the vicinity of this fortress between the forces of Kiev (Russia) led by Graf Yaroslav and the Lithuanians. The Russian forces won and were in control of the area until 1103 when the Lithuanian Graf Radziwill defeated the Russians and captured it.

In the beginning of the 13th century, the Russians again defeated the Lithuanians. In 1241 the whole area was overrun by the Tartars (Mongolian) hordes of Baru-Kahn. Later that year the Asiatic tartars were forced to retreat. Slonim was then incorporated into Lithuania. In 1569 Poland and Lithuania united and for the next 226 years, Slonim was an important Lithuanian duchy center within the framework of greater Poland. Due to many wars that followed, Slonim suffered greatly until the end of the 18th century when Graf Oginski (owner of many square miles of land adjacent to Slonim), became interested in rebuilding the entire area. In 1795 greater Poland was divided between Russia, Germany and Austria. Slonim was taken by Russia and remained under the czarist regime from 1796 to 1915 when the Germans captured Slonim in World War I.

After three long years of hunger, epidemics, and two confrontations between the newly recreated Poland and the Russian Red army, Slonim was twice under the Soviet regime. In 1920 Slonim was recaptured by the Polish army. It remained in Poland until 1939 when Stalin, with Hitler's acquiescence, incorporated Slonim into Soviet White Russia. In 1941 the Nazi hordes captured Slonim from the Reds and in the first year annihilated 70 percent of the Jewish population. In 1944, before the Red army recaptured the city, Slonim was completely destroyed.

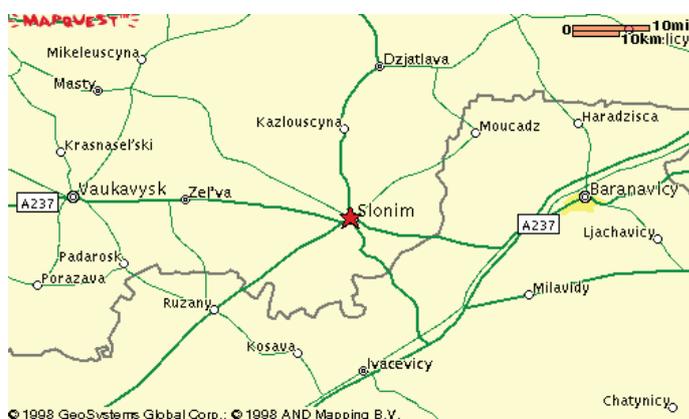
Slonim today, under the Red regime, is but a small, insignificant administrative point. There is not a single Jew left in Slonim.

[http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/slouim/Slonim\\_Ledger.htm](http://kehilalinks.jewishgen.org/slouim/Slonim_Ledger.htm)

**Contributed by Albert Roller**



Exterior of a synagogue. Prewar, Slonim, Poland.



## Video Project



Video project exploring our elders stories of intercultural coexistence between Jewish and other communities in their countries of origin.

RMIT University is conducting a research project with older Jewish community members from Sephardi and other non-Ashkenazi backgrounds

and seeks volunteers interested in making a short professional quality video of their experiences. The project explores the theme of intercultural coexistence between Jewish and other communities in each interviewee's

countries of origin.

Outcomes of the project include brief videos placed on YouTube in which individuals are able to describe their experience as a member of a Jewish community living in a predominantly non-Jewish land.

It is an essential part of the process that participants feel comfortable, are given the opportunity to help plan the interview questions, enjoy the interview, can be accompanied by friends and relatives and ultimately are able to decide if anything needs to be cut from the final production before it goes 'live' on YouTube.

An example of a video on these themes with the Indian Jewish community whilst the research team was in

India is "Jews of Mumbai" which can be found at: [www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ9pZnnHIKs](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IJ9pZnnHIKs). The film highlights the multicultural nature of this city in which anti-Semitism is virtually unknown.

If you or someone you know might like to be interviewed - please do drop a line to: [julian.silverman@rmit.edu.au](mailto:julian.silverman@rmit.edu.au) so

we can discuss how we can make their story available for all.

Many thanks

**Julian Silverman**

**Coordinator Koorie Community Service Programs  
School of Global and Urban Social Studies**

## Upcoming Events at the Jewish Holocaust Centre

**Wednesday 4 September**

*Erev Rosh Hashana*

Museum Open till 1.00pm

**Thursday 5 September**

*Rosh Hashana*

Museum Closed

**Friday 6 September**

*Rosh Hashana*

Museum Closed

**Sunday 8 September**

*Young Adult March of the Living*

*Information Session*

*(20 - 30 years old)*

**Time: 7.30pm**

**Enquiries:** 9528 1985 or [motl@jhc.org.au](mailto:motl@jhc.org.au)

**Wednesday 11 September**

B'nai B'rith ADC & JHC  
present

*special screening of  
ADC Gandel Oration  
of Dr Deborah Lipstadt*

**Time:** 7.30pm

**Cost:** \$10/\$5 Concession

**Online Bookings:**

<http://www.trybooking.com/61008>

**Enquiries:** 9528 1985

**Thursday 12 September**

JHC Social Club

**Dr Ann Wolner**

**Lawyer and Child Psychologist**

*International Child Abduction*

**Time:** 11.15am

**Enquiries:** 9528 1985 or [admin@jhc.org.au](mailto:admin@jhc.org.au)

**Thursday 12 September**

*Adult March of the Living*

*Information Session*

**Time: 7.30pm**

**Enquiries:** 9528 1985 or [motl@jhc.org.au](mailto:motl@jhc.org.au)

**Friday 13 September**

*Erev Yom Kippur*

Museum Open till 1.00pm

**Wednesday 18 September**

*Erev Sukkot*

Museum Open till 1.00pm

**Thursday 19 September**

*Sukkot*

Museum Closed

**Friday 20 September**

*Sukkot*

Museum Closed

**Wednesday 25 September**

*Erev Shmini Atzeret*

Museum Open till 1.00pm

**Thursday 26 September**

*Shmini Atzeret*

Museum Closed

**Friday 27 September**

*Simchat Torah*

Museum Closed

**Thursday 3 October**

JHC Film Club

*"Adam Resurrected" (2008) 106 mins*

**Directed by Paul Schrader**

**Time:** 7.00pm

**Enquiries:** 9528 1985 or [admin@jhc.org.au](mailto:admin@jhc.org.au)

***Wishing you all a  
Happy New Year - Shana Tova***