# ST. LOUIS HOLOCAUST MUSEUM & LEARNING CENTER IN THE DISCUSSION OF THE DISCUSSION OF

SPRING/SUMMER 2016

# Remembering Leo Wolf P.2

# YOM HASHOAH P./ COMMEMORATION



From Dachau to St. Louis: Holocaust Victim's remains find a final resting place.

# MEMORIAL CANDLE



ליום הכיפורים \* ליום היל

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# Upcoming Events

### ROSENBERG FILM SERIES Woman In Gold Sunday, July 31 at 1 pm

Introductory remarks by Dan Reich

### Special Event For Tisha B'av

Sunday, August 14 at 2 pm Special film program, film TBD Introduced by Rabbi Ze'ev Smason, Nusach Hari B'nai Zion

### Cabaret

Sunday, August 28 at 1 pm Introductory remarks by David Benkof

### The Pawnbroker

Sunday, September 25 at 1 pm Introductory remarks by Prof. Warren Rosenblum

### ARTIST LECTURE

Thursday, August 25 at 7 pm Bunny Burson & Roy Strassberg Works of art pulled from memories & research of the Holocaust. Supported by Joan & Jerry Kaskowitz

### MARILYN\* AND ARTHUR GALE FAMILY LECTURE

Thursday, September 15 at 7 pm Guest speaker - Dr. Robert Ericksen

To learn more, go to HMLC.org.



# From Our Chair KENT HIRSCHFELDER

As I began to gather my thoughts on what to say in this "Note From Our Chair," I received the wonderful news that the HMLC had been selected by the Cultural Leadership organization to receive their Transformational Leadership Award as an "outstanding community partner promoting diversity in our region." This award, coming just a year after we received the "What's Right With the Region" recognition from FOCUS St. Louis, really validates the strength of our organization and the qualities of both our staff and lay leadership. These awards highlight our success in developing strong community partnerships and provide a solid, well-respected foundation for us going forward.

My thoughts also incorporate a reflective look back over the past four years. My second two-year term as Chair of the HMLC will end this summer, and this will be my last Newsletter commentary. Some of my previous comments have marveled at how efficient we have become in squeezing more tours and more students into the Museum; the vitally important workshops held around the region, which have allowed teachers to become more effective in teaching the lessons of the Holocaust. Given the wide variety of programs and events we have created, there is rarely a time when the theater doesn't have an exhibit on the walls or a lecture or film scheduled dealing with a pertinent topic; and we are seeing important historical artifacts from our archives displayed in the building atrium on a regular basis.

The establishment of the Rubin\* & Gloria Feldman Family Learning Institute and its Advisory Committee, along with several other educationoriented endowed funds, provides a strong base through which we can continue to develop new, contemporary ways to fulfill our Mission and Vision statements.

But the past four years have also seen sadness at the loss of so many of our survivor "family,"whose passion, dedication and time were the heart and soul, indeed the real "treasure" of the Museum. Their voices can never be replaced, but what they said and did for us, not just speaking to students in the Museum but taking their stories "on the road" to those who were unable to visit us, was a gift of immeasurable value. May their memories be a blessing.

To the staff, members of the Executive Committee and Advisory Council, all the volunteers who have given their support in so many ways: my sincerest "Thank You." I have learned a great deal from each of you and will treasure the many friendships I have made. I look forward to continuing to play a role at the HMLC with its new leadership as we strive to provide the best teaching of the history and lessons of the Holocaust and bring understanding to the complex issues of tolerance and diversity in today's world.

Sincerely,

Kent Hirschfelder Chair, Holocaust Museum & Learning Center





# **Remembering Leo Wolf**

While small in stature, his multiple escapes from death during the Holocaust and his resilience made him a giant within our community. Leo and his wife Sara, also a Holocaust survivor, came to the St. Louis area with almost nothing. They immediately established a home and built a new life for their growing family. While he became a very successful businessman, for Leo family always came first.

It was always his dream to establish a Holocaust museum in St. Louis and he started that momentous initiative in the 1980s with his beloved Sara by his side. He worked in concert with the Jewish Federation of St. Louis leadership, Bill Kahn and Tom Green, to engage donors to realize his dream. In 1994, plans were drawn up and in April of 1995 the Holocaust Museum and Learning Center, in memory of Gloria M. Goldstein, opened its doors. Even in the past few years, when Leo's health prevented him from visiting the Museum, he remained the heart and soul of our Museum, and he always will.

# HMLC to be Honored by Cultural Leadership at September Gala

HMLC is pleased to announce that the organization Cultural Leadership will be giving HMLC its Transformational Leadership Award as an outstanding community partner in promoting diversity and inclusion in our region. Wells Fargo will receive their corporate partner award and Jennings School District will be given the education partner award.

Director Jean Cavender said "Such recognition is only possible because of the synergistic work between the HMLC staff and volunteers. Our volunteers serve as docents, fundraisers, event organizers, educational conference conveners, strategic planners and Art & Writing judges. There is no doubt that we could not do the work we do without them."

The awards will be presented at their 2016 gala to be held on Thursday, September 15, at Windows on Washington at 6:00 pm.

# Thirty-eight Teens Win in 14th Annual Holocaust Museum Art & Writing Contest



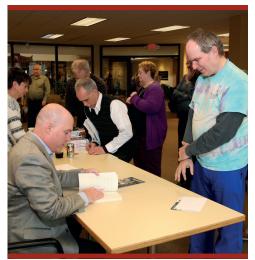
Thirty-eight winners of the HMLC's 14th Annual Art & Writing contest were awarded more than \$3,100 in cash prizes at an awards ceremony held on Monday, May 9, in the Holocaust Museum Theater at the Jewish Federation of St. Louis Kopolow Building.

There were nearly 950 submissions to the contest from students in middle schools and high schools throughout the bi-state area. Numerous awards went to submissions from Lenexa, KS and awards went to students in Bryn Mawr, PA as well as Ardley, NY and Golden, CO.

"The Art & Writing contest is a wonderful opportunity for young people who have visited the Museum or studied the Holocaust in their classrooms to respond creatively to what they have learned," said Rachel Katzman, chair of this year's contest. "Many of the submissions show a depth of understanding and amazing insight into the history and lessons of the Holocaust. This important outreach program was established with the support of Dr. Ira\* and Judy Gall, and we are so appreciative of Judy's continued participation."

As in previous years, the contest is dedicated to the memory of the 1.5 million children who perished during the Holocaust and in honor of the Galls' grandchildren.

Judges for the visual art entries were members of the arts community, Gary Godwin, Jeff Hartz and John Lesser. Judges for writing were Andrea Brownstein (retired educator), Julie Frankel (retired educator) and Sandy Snodgrass (retired professor with Webster University). Winning submissions will be displayed in the Holocaust Museum Theater and at other locations to be determined.



Dr. John C. McManus signing a book for a patron.

## Author Lecture Focuses on Liberation of Concentration Camps

On March 6, 2016, the HMLC hosted the *Hell Before Their Very Eyes* book signing and lecture by award-winning professor and author John C. McManus, Curators' Professor of U.S. Military History at Missouri University of Science and Technology. McManus' book focuses on the experiences of soldiers who liberated Ohrdruf, Buchenwald and Dachau. McManus draws on a rich blend of archival sources and thousands of firsthand accounts to illustrate the horrors American soldiers uncovered in Nazi concentration camps.

The audience gathered in the HMLC to hear McManus speak on the soldiers' determination to bear witness to this horrific period in history. The Rubin\* and Gloria Feldman Family Education Institute of the HMLC and the Saul Brodsky Jewish Community Library sponsored the program, which also included a book signing and light reception. The St. Louis Jewish Book Festival and the National Archives provided additional support.

## Annual Rubin Feldman Memorial Lecture Stresses the Importance of Holocaust Testimony

This year's annual Rubin Feldman Memorial Lecture took place on March 31, 2016. In And you shall tell it to your children...Lessons from life gleaned from survivor testimony, Rabbi Naftali Schiff talked about the lessons for life and relevance for future generations that is taken from interviews with Holocaust survivors worldwide. Rabbi Schiff is the Executive Director of Aish UK and Founder of JRoots, an educational organization that facilitates Jewish Journeys Connecting Generations.

Aish St. Louis and the Rubin\* and Gloria Feldman Family Education Institute of the HMLC supported the lecture. "For several years these two organizations, both so important to Gloria Feldman, have joined together to bring significant and inspiring speakers to St Louis," said Daniel Reich, Director of Education for the Museum.



David Kaplan, Cheryle Atkin, Gloria Feldman, Rabbi Naftali Schiff, Rabbi Yosef David, Rabbi Shmuel Greenwald

# Photographer Captures Faces of Hope in 'The 36 Unknown'

New York photographer Todd Weinstein chose 'a photographer's search for meaning' as the theme for his work at HMLC's opening of the "Legends of 36 Unknown" exhibit. The exhibit, which opened on April 3, 2016, featured photos Weinstein took during a 1995 trip to Poland where he visited Cracow and Auschwitz. "Legends of the 36 Unknown" is a display of 36 photographs suggesting faces and figures in rocks, railroad ties and crumbling bricks.

Weinstein says the title references a portion of the Talmud, the Jewish oral tradition, that suggests the world must contain 36 righteous people in order to exist. "When the world is in great peril, they find some way of helping the world find some sense," Weinstein said. "Then they revert back to their identities, like the shoemaker, the baker, the teacher." Weinstein said these ordinary citizens can't let anyone know about their special roles in the world.

The opening event included Weinstein's remarks and a musical presentation by Rabbi James Stone Goodman. The Morris and Ann Lazaroff Endowment for the Saul Brodsky Jewish Community Library and The Rubin\* and Gloria Feldman Family Institute of the Holocaust Museum & Learning Center co-sponsored the exhibit. The Center for Jewish Learning, Central Reform Congregation, the Jewish Federation of St. Louis and Neve Shalom provided additional support.

# HMLC and the Repertory Theatre Team Up to Teach Kids Holocaust History

The HMLC partnered with The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis for a powerful and enriching program for children. On February 26 and March 16, more than 300 middle school students, parents and educators from the St. Louis area attended the two daytime performances of the play Goodbye Marianne. Afterwards, students toured the HMLC to deepen their understanding of the play's themes and context.

The play is based on the author's own childhood experiences in Nazi Germany. It chronicles the frightening changes that Jewish schoolgirl Marianne Kohn faces while living in 1938 Berlin, including not being able to attend her school, seeing neighborhood stores being burned and having her friends and loved ones disappear.

"Since many middle schools in the area teach a unit each spring about World War II and the Holocaust, we felt this would be an ideal time to perform this play," said Suki Peters, Education Programs Manager at the Repertory Theatre and Director of Goodbye Marianne."The play gives students the chance to walk in Marianne's shoes and understand what it was like for Jewish children during that time."

Combining the play with a visit to the HMLC gave students multiple ways to better comprehend the experiences of Jewish citizens during the Holocaust. HMLC Director Jean Cavender said, "Students are able to tour the Museum and see the play which really accentuates their experience through this artistic medium. We are always looking for ways to educate people about the Holocaust through the arts. Goodbye Marianne is an incredibly creative vehicle that so powerfully expresses the impact of the Holocaust through the eyes of a child."

These performances were generously underwritten by the Rubin\* and Gloria Feldman Family Education Institute.





# Yom HaShoah Commemoration

The Annual Yom HaShoah commemoration took place at Congregation Shaare Emeth on May 5, 2016. The theme of the event was To Honor and Remember: Testimonies of St. Louis Survivors and Witnesses. Hundreds of St. Louis community members gathered for the commemoration, and Shoah survivors and witnesses shared their harrowing accounts. The program included a traditional candle-lighting service, Holocaust Torah procession, liturgical readings and prayers. Andrew Ruben, Mischa and Tova Braitberg of Elegant Ensembles, the son and granddaughter of survivors Szyfra and Gregor\* Braitberg, performed along with soloist Samantha Seigel, a freshman at Parkway Central High School. Sara and the late Leo Wolf and family sponsored the event.



Shelby Wolf Wilhelm, Sara Wolf, Marcia Lee Goldberg



Cherie Worker, Debbie Graham, Laura Call Marcia Lee Goldberg, Margot Prinz,



Miriam Dennison

\*Of Blessed Memory



Rabbi Yosef Landa in the Chevra Kadisha Cemetery in St. Louis on April 3 before a ceremony where the remains of an unknown victim of the Dachau Concentration Camp were laid to rest.

# From Dachau to St. Louis: Holocaust Victim's Remains Find a Final Resting Place

A World War II soldier brought the remains home from a liberated concentration camp to prove the Holocaust happened, and his daughter discovered them two years ago.

Debra Cordy was packing up her childhood home when she found them: the small, wooden box and the envelope labeled, "Dachau," written in her father's handwriting.

Her father, William Elston, had rarely talked about his time on the European front during World War II before his death in 1983. He never told Cordy what he'd found at the liberated concentration camp. Like so many veterans before him, "he pushed his memories to the side and focused on his life back home," Cordy says.

*Concentration Camp were laid to rest.* U.S. with a sacred reminder of the horrors he'd witnessed, the remains of a Holocaust victim from Dachau.

"She said they were still in the house, hidden in a safe place," Cordy remembers. "For years I looked for these bones, wondering if they really existed."

After decades of searching, Cordy and her sister found the remains two years ago as they cleared out their family's New York home. Mindful of her father's self-designated mission to preserve them as proof of atrocities that continue to affect us 70 years later, Cordy packed them up and drove them halfway across the country from upstate New York to her home in St. Louis, where she hoped the St. Louis Holocaust Museum & Learning Center would know what to do next.

On Sunday, April 3, 2016, those remains found a final resting place between two trees in St. Louis at Chevra Kadisha Cemetery during a Jewish burial service overseen by Rabbi Yosef Landa, from the Chabad of Greater St. Louis.

"What I do believe is that my father brought these remains back as a reminder to the world that what he witnessed should never

be allowed to happen again," Cordy said during the burial. "My hope is that this can be used as a symbol of a time in history when the world promised, 'Never again,' and a reminder that prejudice and intolerance are not the answer for humanity."

Dan Reich, curator at St. Louis' Holocaust museum, says Cordy's discovery is the first time he's heard of a Holocaust museum handling newly discovered human remains.

"So many victims of the Holocaust were buried in mass graves or turned to ash," Reich tells St. Louis Magazine. "Many people would feel uncomfortable having even a small amount of human remains in their home. Debra Cordy wanted the remains to be handled with dignity and respect."

Technically, there's no way to know whether the person whose remains now rest in St. Louis was Jewish since some political prisoners ended up in concentration camps, but Cordy says the traditional Jewish burial was a way to honor the person's life and all unknown victims of the Holocaust. She thinks her parents, now both dead, would be happy to know where the remains are now.



Rabbi Yosef Landa lays to rest the remains of an unknown victim of the Dachau Concentration Camp.

During the burial, Cordy recalled a line from one of her father's letters to her mother from World War II: "It was quite a thrill seeing the Statue of Liberty as we left the harbor, but it will be a much greater one when we see it again coming the other way."



# In Memoriam Ben Fainer

On May 17, 2016, we lost one of our most beloved Holocaust survivors, Ben Fainer. After being silent for 60 years (which happens to be the name of his book) about his experience during the Holocaust, he came out with a vengeance. He started speaking at the Museum and he was instantly able to connect with the visitors in a very real way. However, speaking only at the Museum was not enough for him. Ben was his own booking agent and one of our greatest ambassadors. He made it his life's work to make sure everyone he encountered knew about the Museum.

Ben lived through the Holocaust as a young boy who happened to be large for his age. At the age of 9 he passed for 16 and he endured the deprivation of many different camps from 1939 to 1945. After liberation he met and married his beloved Susie, who he met after traveling to Ireland to work for relatives. They immigrated to the United States by way of Canada. Ben made his living

working in the garment industry. He and Susie moved to St. Louis in 1957 where they settled down with their seven children.

Ben had a remarkable survival instinct. There were a few occasions over the past couple of years when experts in the field of medicine did not hold out much hope for his continued existence due to his failing health. Each time he would surprise us all and escape the jaws of death like he did so many times during the Holocaust. He had a powerful will to live and fought to the end of his life. May his memory be a blessing.



# Of Blessed Memory: Liz Lippa

Liz Lippa, Holocaust survivor and longtime volunteer in the St. Louis community for the St. Louis Holocaust Survivors and Descendants group and OASIS, passed away on December 18, 2015 after a long battle with cancer. Liz was a docent, actress and storyteller who touched many lives in the community with her gentle, loving soul. Liz contributed a number of poems and essays to the HMLC about her life and experience escaping to Uruguay and then to the USA from Nazi-invaded Austria. She is survived by six children, twelve grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren of whom she says, "none would exist if I had not been saved from certain death in 1939."

On Sunday, April 10, Liz's family and friends gathered for a Celebration of Life event and the HMLC served as a host for this event. As a child survivor, who managed to escape with her family, her story was especially valuable because she could speak to younger audiences. Liz also appropriately universalized her story, so that it would be relevant to the student audiences she spoke to. She

intentionally infused her testimony with hopefulness and resilience, so her experiences would be viewed as uplifting – emphasizing what she and her family had endured, but still survived – and thrived.

# Thank You!

We want to send out a special thanks to the family and organizations, Harlene and Marvin Wool Fund, The Regional Business Council It's Our Region Fund and St. Louis Jewish Community Inclusion Initiative, that made it possible for us to purchase our new state-of-the-art lift. The flick of a switch opens the doors automatically, giving the user the ability to access the lift without needing any assistance.

In addition to the lift, the St. Louis Jewish Community Inclusion Initiative gave HMLC a grant to purchase two functional wheelchairs for visitors who cannot stand for long periods of time. The addition of this new equipment completes HMLC's goal to provide accessibility to anyone visiting the Museum.

# Thanks to all our Donors

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- Inscribe the name of a loved one
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Rabbi & Mrs. Seth Gordon: Thank you for your love & concern during my recuperation Ilse Altman Debbie & Simon Igielnik on the occasion of the birth of new granddaughter HMLC Staff & Friends **Carol Jablonow's Special** Birthday Harris Frank & Renée Hartstein Debi Kahn's Birthday Michael & Margi Kahn A Speedy & Complete Recovery for Amy Kalishman Vera & Bill Emmons Jerry Kaskowitz's Special Birthday Norma & Leonard Kaplan Sofia Kent Alan & Sharon Weissman Sofia Kent's Special Birthday Felice & Gerry Joyce Linda & Jerry Koenig on the occasion of birthday & anniversary Isaac & Marilyn Young Larry & Hannah Langsam: Thanks for all you do!! James & Marla Wild Joe Liberman's 90th Birthday Donald Goldblum Liz Lippa: Thinking of you Peggy Schaffer Michael & Leslie Litwack's new granddaughter, Zoe Hannah Litwack HMLC Staff & Friends Phyllis Loiterstein's Birthday The Monday Mahj Group Wally Mayer's 90th Birthday HMLC Staff & Friends Bonnie & Phil Levens Elisabeth Mayer & Family Wally Mayer & Rosalie Rotenberg's Wedding Anniversary Bonnie & Phil Levens Paul & Betty Mendelson: Thank you for your generous

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for a speedy recovery Jerry & Joan Kaskowitz Saul Rozen: We love you, Dad! Marcia & Tim Thomsen JoEllen & Leonard Rubenstein on the occasion of the birth of new grandson Phyllis & Howard Loiterstein David Sherman's 50th Birthday Colleen Isele Joanie Sherman's 80th Birthday Cookie Goldberg Leah Simpson obtaining a Master's Degree in Genocide & Holocaust Studies Holly & Rob Lane Sherry Singer: Our thoughts & prayers are with you for a speedy recovery Jerry & Joan Kaskowitz Shirley Snitzer: Thank you for all of your many kindnesses Lynn Spewak

Karla Rosenblum: Best wishes

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# Call for Artifacts and Memorabilia

Survivors, veterans and descendants: Please consider donating memorabilia relating to the Holocaust or pre-WWII life, documents, immigration papers or artifacts brought back from the war. Those crumbling papers and military souvenirs, so important to a parent or grandparent, would be a welcome addition to the HMLC's archival collection. Documents and artifacts would be respectfully preserved.

Some limitations based on size and volume. Call Dan Reich at 314-442-3714 or email DReich@JFedSTL.org for further information.

Return this form along with your donation to: Holocaust Museum & Learning Center, 12 Millstone Campus Drive, St. Louis, MO 63146

# 2016 Friends Campaign

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