

child survivors of the holocaust

CONNECTIONS

VOLUME 9 NO 2

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Dear Child Survivors,
We are thinking of you in these difficult times and hope you and yours are well. I wanted to write a few more words but we have so much to share in this edition. If you would like to, please email me at viv.parry@bigpond.com. Until we can be together again warm wishes from your CSH team, Viv Parry, our brilliant Connections graphic designer Lena Fizman and Mary Slade.

Wishing you all a Chag Sameah!

Holocaust Survivor Support Program (HSSP) - asset/income tests: Lana Khasin from Jewish care is the CSH representative she writes to us: The eligibility rules for Survivors to access the Claims Conference funded

Holocaust Survivor Support Program have been changed. Key changes relate to asset and income thresholds being increased, meaning more people can now receive services, some of whom may not have previously qualified for funded support. In addition, as from 1 July 2020, there will be no co-payment or additional charges collected from eligible clients of the Holocaust Survivor Support Program – the in-home care services will be entirely free of charge to consumers. This covers Domestic Assistance, Personal Care, Allied health and Nursing care. Please email **Lana Khasin** lkhasin@jewishcare.org.au; or call her direct line 03 8517 5629 and leave a message.

**Viv Parry, Mary Slade
and Lena Fizman.**

Greetings to my fellow Child Survivors of the Holocaust

Three months ago, I wrote that this pandemic cannot be compared to the Holocaust. Look, we are not singled out as special victims. For many of us our children are looking after us while we pass time in our reasonably comfortable homes watching television. And yet, commentators are starting to use analogies of war. Especially in Victoria, where we are worse off now than three months ago, people talk of a protracted 'war' against this virus. We have to 'bunker down' before its onslaught, hidden in our homes while the enemy rampages outside. We have to wait until we have the proper weapons to defeat this enemy.

Suspended in this kind of phoney war, we become exhausted. Emotionally we are immersed in news and anxiety, cognitively we miss our routines and sleep, and everything is an effort. We are exhausted from doing nothing while time passes us by. We didn't need this near the end of our lives. And yet, we will get through this, even if it takes longer than we had hoped. In the meantime, let

me provide some DO'S AND DON'TS we have learned from other disasters: Keep up your usual safety standards while driving, as a pedestrian, and while at home. Continue your medications. Watch your diet, be careful with coffee, alcohol, and drug intakes and keep up your hygiene, grooming, exercise, and routines. Allow yourself to feel and share your feelings, and allow yourself to be helped. Take away positives: Many of us have been comforted by declarations and actions that manifest that we are loved and our lives have meaning and purpose. Some have taken advantage of this capsule to sort out baggage, prune out inessentials, write, paint, take up hobbies, and be creative. We've been through worse and we will survive!



Paul Valent

Greetings from our Child Survivors



Dear friends, Greetings from my Melbourne lock-down. We are used to face and overcome unexpected challenges, and to create a new productive and exciting life afterwards. From these experiences we got our wisdom. Now we can share it with

the young ones, novices in the battles of life. The current uncertain situation affects them strongly. They have to learn quickly, and we, with our life experience, can help them to learn what is most precious in life: our mutual love and our connections! Wishing you all good health and good luck.

Roza Riaikkenen



To Viv and the Child Survivors

I would like to share with you how I am doing in the lockdown during this epidemic crisis. What has happened to me has been very surprising as I thought I had dealt with my past traumas worked through the bad terror attacks at night with help from

a therapist. I spoke often at forums, schools. Recently the

My best wishes go out to you, my dear fellow Child Survivors, hope you are all coping well. It's been a long time since we met each other and I often think of the inclusive meetings that we had regarding our mutual Holocaust background.

You may remember that I was born in the Warsaw Ghetto and have been assessed as being one of the youngest child survivors.

Being born in the Ghetto which was securely guarded; for a whole year my Mother under much fear hid me under the rubble, under floorboards and behind cupboards in a small flat to avoid detection. By some manipulation, which in itself is a whole story, I was smuggled in a parcel through the barrier by a sympathetic guard and then given to a Polish family. More issues happened but here I am



To my Child Survivor friends,

I have been thinking about you all and I hope you are all managing OK and getting by as best we all can in these troubled times. I had my 90th birthday recently and the Holocaust

Comparative Timelines

The Current Corona Virus lockdown is causing both major and minor inconveniences to our lifestyle. But drawing on our childhood experiences let us put this in a proper perspective. We are restricted in our movements, but not confined behind barbed wire. We can go for walks, shop for food without hindrance. We are ordered to wear masks – for our protection, not ordered to wear a Judenstern making us a target for harassment or worse, a knock on our door will be a delivery or friendly neighbour, not an armed man in uniform to intimidate, arrest us or worse, we cannot see our family and friends, but know they are

old feelings came back... fears of dying or my husband dying leaving me alone separation from my loved ones my children and grandchildren; it is triggering everything again and yet it is not war. When I read the article written by Paul Valent, I identified so much I told myself it is NOT the same we will get through this maybe I will need more help to deal with my old traumas. I hope all the child survivors will survive this as well.

Bernadette Gore

in my late 70's, only to experience this Covid-19 lockdown, as we all are. I also wish to say how lucky I feel to have my wife of 54 years, two wonderful children and my grandson Benjamin who is nearly four.

So, I am thinking of you and sending out good thoughts and wishes to you all. You are all very special people.

I would also like to express my condolences to the family of Susi Sambor on her passing. Susi was a Holocaust survivor and often worked with me as a guide. I remember her with great admiration.



Henry Buch

Centre made me a party on the footpath outside the centre, it was a lovely surprise and I appreciated it very much. I look forward to seeing you all again in person. Till we meet again my very best wishes to you all. I miss you!

Irma Hanner

not being deported and murdered, we have food easily available and are not starving. If we get sick, we have a word class health service – even if there is no medicine for the virus yet – but modern drugs for most diseases, on balance we need to count our blessings. Perhaps the advertising slogan of the 1960's which we all remember A cup of tea, a Bex and a good lie down is a message we need to heed in the current situation.



Garry Fabian



Dear Friends and Fellow Child Survivors of the Holocaust,

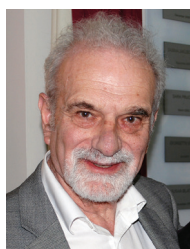
We all have many thoughts and doubts in this time, at stage 3 lockdown, for the second time around in Melbourne, during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Right now, I am thinking of you all, with fond

memories of our gatherings, sharing our stories, recalling our experiences, shedding tears and nurturing hope for our peaceful existence to continue, the way we have known it for over 7 decades.

After all we have been the lucky generation to have survived those trying times in our young lives. We have conquered

Dear Friends,

I hope you are all well and being looked after during this strange time that we are living through. The Child survivors have a very special place in my life, in all our lives, I think. It gave us the unique opportunity of “getting together” and revisiting together those faraway events and places we thought had nothing to do with our lives at all! So many exciting discoveries, so many ‘that ring bells for me!’ We were so lucky to have you discover us, Paul, and so fortunate to have you with us! And a big thank-you to Viv Parry who continues to look after us ‘old child Survivors’. So whatever life throws at us – and it has a way



Shalom! Dear fellow child survivors of the holocaust. In this time of great anxiety due to the advent of COVID-19 and the necessary restrictions on our movements, I like to calm myself by listening to music, reading old and new novels, keeping myself up to date with

the latest medical literature and current affairs, zooming various lectures, concerts, discussion, zooming with friends, going for a walk with my beloved wife, Margo and of course, wearing a mask. We should remind ourselves, that we have faced much worse situations in the past. Margo and I have recently re-read Albert Camus’, The

Dear Friends,

Just a note that I am thinking of you all fondly in these pandemic times. I am imagining that we are sitting in a large circle listening to each other’s stories in a Safe Space. Then in a smaller circle in our art group where we are busily working on our art conjuring up deeply buried images from our past...and happy times together like at

many challenges; we came out of the darkness with newly acquired strength, resilience and with optimism for future generations.

Just as we will do so now, in “real time” because we know that once this crisis, that came upon us and the entire world so suddenly and unexpectedly, when it’s over life will resume with fresh energy to a different “normal” There will be new ideas for us to adapt, and our community will flourish again. Warm regards to everyone, stay safe, keep well, until we meet again.

Suzie Vati,

Member of CSH since the time it was established.



of throwing many unexpected things at us – we will hopefully find a way to beat this virus! A walk in the park, a sunny day, and ‘Naches’ from our children and grandchildren of course – even from ‘a distance’ – I wish you all the very best, and always keep a very warm spot for Child Survivors! And let’s all raise a drink, imaginary – or real! – To the health of Child Survivors!

Floris Kalman

Plague about a similar situation in the 1940s that we have now. Interestingly, Camus describes people’s behaviour in the lockdown situation which is exactly what we see happening today. The anxiety, the worry, the blame, etc. Today, we have the benefit of modern technology that allows us to communicate, hear and see our loved ones. Imagine, if this pandemic had happened 20 years ago, all we would have had would be the telephone. Whatever happens the strong survivor spirit that you all display will see us through. I’ll end with three little phrases; wash your hands, wear a mask and above all, be kind to others. Zeyn gezunt!

Louis Roller

our Retreat in 2001.

I truly hope that our SAFE SPACE will return soon!

In the meantime, we are in “survivor mode” as Adults this time.

With love.

Anne Handelsmann



My Life ... My Story

Netty Tepe Schoemaker

My name is Netty Tepe-Schoemaker and I was born on 14th June 1938 in Amsterdam. During those early years I struggle to recall any memories I have about the war. Except to say that due to housing shortages, my family was unable to live within the Jewish community, however this was a blessing. For it meant that the four of us, which included my parents Marinus and Margaretha and younger brother Alex, were safe for a few more years.



Alex and Netty 1942

This quickly changed when the Germans decreed that all Jewish people were not allowed to work. So, when my father was forced to leave his job at the Amsterdam Town Hall, he began working with the Amsterdam South Underground. This meant that people were often brought to our house and stayed a couple of nights before being transported to a more secure hiding place. It was in late June 1943, that my family's safety was put at risk, when residents within our neighbourhood began to complain about all of the people they had seen moving in and out of our home.

From this point on I can remember everything that happened. One early morning my parents took both my brother and I out for a walk to another house. We were told to be very quiet but because I didn't have my teddy, my parents had a difficult time trying to console me. We were only able to stay for a short while since a member of the Amsterdam South Underground was arrested and could provide the Germans with information about where we were staying. We then moved into a two-bedroom flat with my Auntie Catrien and Uncle Isaac Polak along with their eldest daughter Greet. With seven people living in such a small space, it was obviously very cramped.

Even then we still weren't safe. So, with the help of the underground we were able to move to a small house in a place called Haarlem, which is about 19km northwest of Amsterdam. Since I was quite a live wire and loved to talk,

my parents drugged me so that we could travel safely to our new home. Unfortunately, my aunty and uncle were arrested and taken away but my cousin Greet was lucky to escape and she came to live with us, along with my grandmother Vogeltje Cohen.

We were locked up in that small cottage for about 10 months when my mother gave birth to my little sister Sonja. After a few weeks, on the 31st May 1944, my mother could not cope anymore and wanted to get out of the house. At first my father wouldn't let her but, in the end, he gave in. This day is like a photograph imprinted on my mind; we had barely left the house when a tall man in uniform stopped us and asked for our identification papers. I remember having to walk over a bridge to a nearby police station where a lady from the Red Cross walked in, took the pram with my baby sister and wheeled her out, whilst the rest of my family were transported to the local prison. After a few weeks, all of the children were removed from the prison and as we were being rounded up, we saw our parents climbing into a big truck. When I saw my mum, I



Members of Netty's family including her mother displayed in Auschwitz barrack 21.

waved to her, thinking that we would see her again at the end of the day. How wrong I was!

All the children in the prison were then taken to the local orphanage, where my brother and I were reunited with our baby sister Sonja. After only a few days, we were all separated again: Sonja stayed at the orphanage, Alex was sent away to live with another family and I stayed with friends of my parents in The Hague. I remember being told to call them mummy and daddy and that my name was now Agnes. How confusing was that for a six-year-old? To be told that these strangers were my parents, even though just days before, I had waved goodbye to my real mum and



Netty with her brother Alex and sister Sonja.

now I had to remind myself that I was not Netty anymore. Whilst I was there, we had soldiers constantly searching our house for young men who might be hiding from the German government. Every time I heard knocking on the front door, I was so scared that I either hid under the bed, or in the cupboard. Yet I still witnessed some horrible things: people being murdered by the soldiers, houses bombed in our street and body parts scattered all over the place.

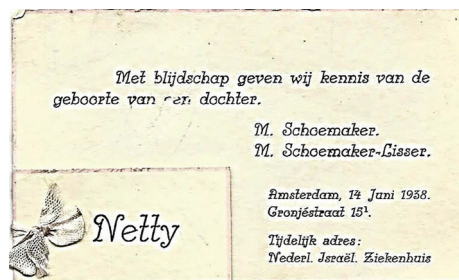
During the final winter of the war I remember it being so cold that we would spend most of the day in bed; for we could not afford to have heating in the house. If we were lucky, my new 'mum' would be able to steal potato peels from the German soldiers who had taken over the local school. But sometimes other people got there before her, which meant that we wouldn't have anything to eat for a whole day.

A month later after the war was over, a strange man who looked like a walking skeleton, knocked on the door. Turns out this man that I did not recognise was my father. It wasn't until 1980, that I learnt how my father survived Sachsenhausen. He was evacuated out of the camp on a death march towards Munich and it was on this long journey, that he saw an opportunity to save himself by rolling into a ditch and pretending to be dead. Later he was rescued by American soldiers who took care of him.

Unfortunately, my grandparents, aunts and uncles and nearly all of my cousins never came back. Except for my older cousin Fia Polak, who had survived Auschwitz and was set free by the Russians. My father even went back

to Amsterdam hoping that he would be able to find my mother, but she didn't survive. It turns out that both my mother and her sister were taken from Auschwitz and transported on a cattle train to Flossenburg Concentration Camp. My mother died on 23rd March 1945, just weeks before the prisoners were liberated in April.

A few years later my father remarried a lady who was his secretary before the war - this was a marriage of convenience. My stepmom was very cruel in her treatment of me and my brother. My father unfortunately was no help to us. He was never the same when he came back from the war because he couldn't escape the nightmares. When I heard him screaming each night, I thought it was normal and something that all fathers do. Luckily before my 16th birthday, my stepmom allowed me to visit her sister who lived in a town called Hengelo near the German border. Once I arrived, I decided to never go back home. It was there that I was able to find work in a hospital and start living the life that I wanted.



Netty's birth announcement

In 1956, I met my husband to be, Peter and after marrying in 1958, we decided to leave our home in the Netherlands and start a new life in Australia. A place that was far away from all of the pain and misery and could give us the freedom we so desperately wanted. It is in this beautiful country, that Peter and I were able to create a wonderful life together and have four beautiful children, 8 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. But there was still something that the war had taken from me - the Jewish name my parents had given me. After receiving some baby photos and my birth announcement from my cousin Fia, I knew it was time. So, in 2017 I was officially registered as Netty Tepe-Schoemaker.

Tribute: Susi Sambor



Susi Sambor at Rae Silverstein's engagement to her husband Mervyn in 1976.

Susi and Sam Sambor were very close friends of my parents, Wolf and Sophie Stawski. I can't remember when I first met them but it seems like I've known her since I was a teenager. I found her to be a very warm, loving

and generous person. I could always have a long chat with her whenever she visited my parents and I remember her telling me some lovely stories about her life as she was growing up. Susie was a very loyal and caring friend of my parents and was at all our simchas. When I got engaged Susi was one of my mother's friends who came to help prepare for the party and give my mother much assistance. (Susi made amazing cakes). Susi and Sam would sometimes holiday with my parents and they would have a wonderful time. Susi and Sam had a tile shop in Glenhuntly and she was always most willing to assist people.

I last saw Susi, her 2 sons Leo and Perry and Susi's carer when they visited the Jewish Holocaust Centre in 2019. She came and especially asked if I was there. I remember thinking how even as she was becoming more frail, she still had a beautiful smile and face. I have deep regrets that I didn't see her in the Regis Aged Care Facility she was living in.

