

“FAMILY MATTERS”

**Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute
Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center
Warsaw, Poland**



Year-End Report July-December 2010

Yale J. Reisner, Director

Anna Przybyrszewska Drozd, Associate Director

“FAMILY MATTERS”

Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center Year-End Report, July-December 2010

Sample Notes of Appreciation to the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center July-Dec. 2010

“As you surely know, those who deal with genealogy, write all the day to different places, and only from time to time, we get a positive answer, sometimes after months of waiting for it. I'm really happy with the prompt and very effective answer from your side.”

– R. G.,
Buenos Aires, Argentina

AS IS OUR CUSTOM, it is once again our pleasure to offer you — our friends, supporters and potential supporters — an overview of our Center's activities over the last six months. We offer some program highlights, some statistics and some reflections from the semester just past.

NEW SAPLINGS SPROUT EACH DAY

The completion of a working version of our long-planned and long-anticipated Institute-wide database is enabling us to begin the long-term task of merging the Institute's various databases and switching from earlier platforms to a new fully integrated system. For the next many months, much of our effort will be dedicated to importing and inputting existing data, newly acquired data and newly developed data into the new system, so that the material will then be readily available to us, to our colleagues and eventually to the general public to an extent previously unknown.

Originally conceived of by the Genealogy Center staff, the Institute database for the first time ever brings together the data sets of all Institute departments, permitting data sharing between departments as well as cross-referencing related materials in different media (e.g., books, photos, artwork, etc.). Moreover, the unified database provides data security by backing up and duplicating individual databases which had, until now, been at risk of being lost or corrupted.

From the Genealogy Center perspective, this unified database will open up far greater and faster possibilities of searching for information on individuals, their families and their interrelationships.

In other database news, the Center acquired an up-to-date database of burials in the Warsaw Jewish cemetery that is significantly more comprehensive than the online database now available to the general public. It has already earned its

stripes, locating hitherto “missing” graves and yielding crucial details that have conclusively proven family connections for which no other documentation exists.

NO TIME TO WASTE

While the majority of our client contacts take place via e-mail, there is an unceasing, year-round flow of “walk-in business,” i.e., people who either come to our office having planned to do so or who, being in Poland with some other purpose in mind — be it independent genealogy, tourism, study or business — learn of our existence and decide to pay us an impromptu visit to learn what they can of their family history.

Meetings with such individuals can take anywhere from half an hour to two or three hours, depending on the nature and complexity of their question and on the amount of information accessible at the time.

During the current reporting period [July 1-December 31, 2010], clients from the following countries were received in person at the Center:

Poland:	159	Sweden:	4
Israel:	127	Uruguay:	4
USA:	115	Iran:	3
Australia:	24	Germany:	3
Argentina:	18	Italy:	2
France:	14	Mexico:	2
Canada:	13	New Zealand:	2
Brazil:	12	Belarus:	1
Britain:	10	Norway:	1
Belgium:	6	Ukraine:	1
Guatemala:	4	Uzbekistan:	1
Netherlands:	4	Venezuela:	1

for a total of 533 on-site visitors from some 24 different countries.

In addition, during that same period, over a thousand e-mails were responded to, as well as dozens of letters, scores of Skype contacts and countless phone calls.

Keeping in mind that the majority of those responses required some degree or other of original subject-specific research, the volume of work involved was truly prodigious!

SPEAKING OUT, SPREADING THE WORD

Although Center staff are kept quite occupied by the volume of demand for information about individual families, from time to time, we have occasion to reach out and speak to somewhat larger audiences, those that come to us and those to whom we are invited.

Between July and December 2010, we left the Institute twice by special invitation. In July, we travelled to the International Summer Seminar on Jewish Genealogy in Los Angeles. During the week-long seminar, we spoke a total of eight times on a variety of genealogical, historical and Poland-related subjects. Closer to home, staff participated in the Poland-wide Limmud Keshet Polska

“I am boundlessly grateful to you and your institution for the assistance in locating my relatives after years of unsuccessful searching through the Red Cross and the Forward newspaper. This is no small achievement and deserves the highest accolades, admiration and thanks for this unexpected event in my personal life. No one here anticipated that such a possibility existed and it’s being seen here almost as a kind of miracle. Thanks to you, I was invited to Australia (along with my son) and I met my aunt Dora, who turned 97 this year, and my aunt’s large and lovely family. These were unforgettable moments in our lives. The sons of my foster parents [...] are rejoicing with me, together with their own children and grandchildren. Once again, I salute you and express my heartfelt thanks for making it possible to find my family.”

— H.V.,
Vilnius, Lithuania

“Since I stepped into your office in Warsaw last year on the 25th of May, the world surrounding our knowledge of our family heritage has been, short of precise words, beyond amazing... First I thank you and your colleague for so quickly identifying my grandfather Aronas in the Business Guide of 1929...it actually was a most significant key in unravelling our past. [...] “My sister Rene [...] who lives in Melbourne has very ably progressed with this information, rounding out the important documentation, leading to recorded interviews with people in Rudiskes and [with] Shimon S. who at 94 years old lives in Beer Sheva, Israel, knew our father and grandfather Aronas [and] who turns out to have been the Chairman of the Jewish Community of that area and lived in a house owned by my grandfather. She was further able to trace our lineage back to documentation of a very great grandfather, Amiel R., born in 1763.”

– S.R.,
Lusaka, Zambia

Jewish education conference, conducting a workshop on genealogy research and giving a talk on Jewish surnames.

At our Center facility, we also welcomed several groups and informed them about our work, about the work of the Institute and about the state of Polish Jewry today. To mention just a few, the groups included the Forum for Dialogue Among Nations, the Board of Directors of the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee and UJA-Federation of New York.

Another, more immediate form of contact with other institutions comes when we are called upon to provide our expertise in various areas. Some examples this semester have included:

- in an inheritance case, clarifying for the regional court how it is possible for the same Jew to have two given names: one Polish and one Hebrew or Yiddish;
- in a case involving the trafficking of Judaica artifacts, interpreting Hebrew terminology used by the suspects for the cultural heritage crimes unit of the Polish national police;
- assisting the Jewish Agency for Israel in certifying the Jewish lineage of applicants for the Birthright Israel program;
- in real-estate inheritance cases, aiding municipal governments in locating heirs to Jewish-owned properties;
- assisting rabbinate in Poland, the U.K. and Israel in determining the halachic status of individuals of Polish background who wish to be married in traditional religious ceremonies;
- helping the Jewish communities of Warsaw and Lublin and the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland in developing appropriate Hebrew and English markers for cemeteries and memorial sites; and
- correcting errors in the names of towns and families in the Yad Vashem Database of Victims of the Shoah which have become evident in the course of our work with specific families.

CAN NEWSPRINT GROW ON FAMILY TREES?

During the latter half of 2010, the Center’s activities attracted a fair amount of media attention. Reports making reference to the Center or to results of the Center’s work appeared in print and/or online in:

- the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA) wire service blog “The Wandering Jew”; and
- the Israeli newspapers *Maariv*, *Haaretz* and the *Jerusalem Post*;
- on the popular “Tracing the Tribe” Jewish genealogy blog; as well as on broadcast media:
- CNN’s “World’s Untold Stories”; and
- ABC Radio National’s “360 Documentaries” (Australia).

Research support is also currently being provided to the NBC television series “Who Do You Think You Are?” in connection with the Polish-Jewish roots of selected American celebrities.

WHY WE NEED YOUR HELP

Each day, every month, we are asked for counselling and assistance with new family trees. Yet we continue to work as a team of only two, struggling to cope with ever-growing demand and a constant flow of on-site visitors. Much as we try to provide each of our clients with case-specific guidance, we can only do so much. We urgently need your help to continue our efforts and improve our ability to provide comprehensive and timely responses. **We need funds that would allow us to recruit an intern or interns** to assist with logistics, such as scanning, filing, data entry, website management and responding to less-specialized items of correspondence.

We need funding to make our long-planned interactive website a reality.

The website will provide a portal into the Institute's developing database and links to other sites of interest. It will feature news items such as those in this report (and more), touching stories, historic images and newly discovered source materials. As an interactive website, it will provide a way for our clients to share their own family stories with us. Much documentation was lost in WW II; often the only extant copies of vital records, letters and photo documentation of Polish Jewry lie not in Poland, but in private hands abroad. The "repatriation" of that memory to our Institute (as a scanned image, for example) makes such unique information available to researchers the world over. The site might also eventually offer contact with Center staff via Skype™.

Funding is needed for the acquisition of reference materials, photos and historic documents which can be found daily in Polish antique shops and on-line auction sites. Some remarkable items can appear, but they can only be added to Institute collections if the funds for their immediate purchase are at hand. If funds are not readily at hand, precious items may be lost to us all forever.

Please: Don't hesitate to give because you feel your gift is too small! Small contributions add up and even a small donation gives us a large shot of moral support as we face almost overwhelming demand. Help us to help you — and to help so many others as well.

Plant a seed — and the family trees will surely grow. A few notable examples follow.

A TALE OF MANY CITIES

There are 2000 graves in the Polish cemetery of Teheran; among them is the grave of Janina, a Jewish woman from Warsaw.

The Poles had come to Iran by the thousands when the Polish Second Army ("Anders' Army") was evacuated from the Soviet Union during World War II by way of Iran, Palestine and Egypt into the European theater. When the war was over, a Polish colony remained in Iran, made up almost exclusively of Polish women who had married Iranian men. All had married members of the Iranian elite, as at the time only wealthy and well-bred young men knew foreign languages.

Janina's friend Paula, a Jew from the Polish city of Radom, left Teheran at war's end. She never went back to Poland with which, as she put it in her elegant

"The [material] arrived today in the mail, full of pleasant surprises... It includes the Coat of Arms of Akhtyrka, an obscure town in the Ukraine, where I spent time in 1944 and 1945, working in a factory. It includes a picture of Lake Naroch, the summer camp where I was when Germany attacked the Soviet Union, June 22, 1941. It has a picture of the building in [which] I lived. The real treasure for me is the picture labeled 'ORT Knitting Class, 1938.' [...] My father, principal of the school, is in the back row, his head almost centered in the circle on the poster. I visited the school with my father, September 1, 1939, the day Germany invaded Poland. Father tried to find a place to hide the machinery, to save it from potential destruction during the fighting. [...] I am sure that it took a lot of hard work and professional research to find all this valuable information.[...] Had to express my appreciation for all the good work you do!"

— W. K.,
San Francisco, CA, USA

“I can’t explain how excited and touched I am with all the information you have sent me. Most of all, the information you sent agrees with the little and confused information we had about the family, since all we knew were the stories and details given orally by my mom and my aunt. We don’t have any written documents. [...] Thanks for all, I am very grateful to all of you in helping us find our roots. I really was eager to know about all this.”

– D.R.,
Santiago, Chile

“I just have to thank you again.... I am still blown away by your find. My great-great-grandfather's ad!...”

– S.L.,
Palm Springs, CA, USA

interwar Polish, she still had some “unsettled accounts.” Instead of returning to Poland, she went on to Israel.

Janina herself stayed behind. In Iran, she met her future husband, an Iranian, and they had two children together. Paula visited her a number of times, as long as she was still able to. After the revolution, though, that ceased to be possible. It was from Paula that Janina learned that her brother, whom she had last seen in Russia, had decided, many years after the war, to emigrate to Israel with his family.

Janina’s husband knew she was Jewish. But the children didn’t. It might be dangerous. A few years before her death, Janina asked Paula, in the event of her death, to tell the children the truth about her background and to tell them her real name. Janina never troubled to maintain her Polish citizenship. She was living a different life entirely. Yet, everyone in the Polish embassy knew her: for years, she had acted as their consultant and translator (she knew a dozen or so languages).

Janina’s daughter is a film director, her son an engineer with his own business. They recall their mother with great love, with tremendous respect and admiration.

It was the daughter who approached us first. She had a lot of trouble at first dealing with the fact that she was in the Jewish Historical Institute. Someone might find out. She didn’t tell her brother anything, because, as she said, they might lose everything. Because someone in Iran might find out. She wanted to meet her uncle, but how could she? Her uncle was over eighty years old and Paula told us that he wasn’t in good health. He couldn’t possibly come to Poland.

Her brother, when he found out about everything much later, reacted entirely differently. He is doing business with a Polish company whose representative keeps pressing him to claim Polish citizenship. He would take the matter into his own hands. But he wasn’t ready to go to Israel; he was frightened.

We finally phoned Israel once again. The doctor decided that the uncle was up to a trip to Poland. He arrives with his daughter and grandson. Our two siblings fly in from Iran with their children. Our office is suddenly filled with a cacophony of languages: Polish, Russian, English, Hebrew, Persian. Anyone who can, translates for anyone who doesn’t understand. And the story goes on from there, but now it’s all in the family’s hands. Our job is done.

WE NEVER GROW UP COMPLETELY

Searching for family isn’t always easy. Andrzej, an engineer from Poland, was born at the start of World War II. His father was a Jew. He doesn’t know exactly what happened to him during the first few years of his life. He remembers his father during the war, so they must have been together, staying with his mother’s family. But maybe not the whole time. He remembers his father after the war, too: how he sat on his father’s lap and how, one day, his father just vanished, taken away by the secret police, never to return. He never managed to find a trace of him again. He doesn’t know where they took him and he doesn’t know what ultimately became of him. He does remember a visit from an aunt and an

uncle and he remembers meeting his father's mother and father — his grandparents. And then they, too, disappeared. Just like his father had disappeared.

For a long time, Andrzej couldn't bring himself to search for family, yet he wanted to set the facts straight, so he came to see us. In the JHI Archives, we found traces of his grandfather and grandmother, of his uncles and his aunt. All those whom he had remembered from when he was about five years old.

In the archives of Yad Vashem, we located testimony from his grandfather, stating that his son Lejb — Andrzej's father — had not survived the war. "But that's not true!" Andrzej protested and, once again, showed the photo of him sitting on his father's lap as a five-year-old boy. After the war. "They took him away then and he never came back. And then they left."

When we located his surviving family in Israel, we found an astonished cousin (who had, in fact, once heard that there was supposed to be some family in Poland, but didn't entirely believe it) and Aunt Klara who actually remembered Andrzej. Hearing this, Andrzej himself didn't seem any too pleased at first. He didn't even seem inclined to establish contact, even though it was he who had initiated the search.

Yet we did manage to coax one smile out of him, the first we'd seen since we'd first met.

Children experience any departure as rejection and Andrzej had been abandoned so many times. He didn't want to go through that again. Just like a child. As a grownup, however, he understood intellectually that people in postwar Poland had to make certain choices. And that contact between Poland and Israel wasn't easy in those years. That the same secret police who had taken his father away couldn't be entirely uninterested in his mother and that she might also not have been eager to receive mail from people in the so-called West. Out of fear for herself and for the welfare of her son. So this was not a rejection; it was how the family had sought to protect him.

Andrzej is in touch with his family now, but his real search, the search for himself, is still far from over.

THE LONG ROAD TO GUATEMALA

"Jewish immigrants, whose Jewish traditions are still present, arrived at the beginning of the 20th century from Germany and Middle East countries, followed in the 1920s by East European Jews. Many of the latter came via Cuba and considered Guatemala only a transit stop until they could obtain visas to the United States." [*Encyclopedia Judaica*, "Guatemala"]

Some descendants of those East European Jews dropped in on us one rainy, winter evening. A mother and her three teenage children who were falling asleep after the rigors of their long journey.

Both parents' grandparents came from Poland. From different towns. They met only once they were in Guatemala and it was there that they married. In the course of conversation, we were able to pin down some basic personal information, where they had come from, where they were born, who was who's child and if there were any siblings.

"I wanted to again express my deep and sincere gratitude for the email you sent me last week attaching the [...] passport pages and photo for my Jute (Julia) [...]. These documents mean so very, very much to me -- I only wish my grandmother had lived long enough to see them herself, as Julia was only one of three surviving family members from her Rohatyn family."

– M.R.O.,
Paris, France

"I'm very glad that I followed my intuition and came to you, to Warsaw. What the documents indicate is important, but were it not for your amazing efforts, the wonderful results wouldn't have been possible. You have no idea how much my mother was moved. She can't stop crying.... She remembers everything."

– S.T.,
Hod HaSharon, Israel

“I was recently in Warsaw [at] the Jewish Genealogy and Family Heritage Center, part of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. [The staff there] spent several hours working with me to trace some of my family who originated in Eastern Europe. I would like to make a contribution to the Jewish Heritage Initiative Fund which supports the work [of the Center]. I was very impressed with the initiative, dedication, and professionalism [...] displayed, and found it very meaningful and thrilling to have found information on some of my family. The services so generously performed in [that] office are invaluable.”

– N.G.,
Santa Rosa, CA, USA

“Grandpa was an orphan,” we were told. “He left Poland because he had no family. He had no passport. He boarded the ship illegally. That’s how he got to Cuba. Later on, he moved to Guatemala.”

When we asked about the other side of the family, about the paternal grandfather, we got a similar answer: “Grandpa and his brothers had no family; they were orphans. They sailed without passports to Cuba and later they moved to Guatemala.”

The youngest of these orphans, our guests’ grandfathers, were nine or ten years old. “When he got to Guatemala, Grandpa sold cigars on the street. He made them himself. Later, he set up a shop. As soon as his brothers arrived in Cuba, they went on to somewhere else.”

He had probably worked on a tobacco plantation in Cuba, we deduced. The stories seem to reflect the organized trafficking of young boys as an inexpensive work force to Cuba — to “a better world.” On the one hand, there were many orphans in faraway Poland with nowhere to go. On the other hand, more workers were needed in Cuba. Were there not an organized operation of some kind, how could three orphan boys possibly have boarded ocean liners without supervision, without money, without documents? How could they have been allowed to disembark and enter Cuba without papers or someone there to receive them?

The key moment in our conversation followed when our guest looked at us wide-eyed and said: “My God! Now I see them entirely differently. They were just little boys! And they had to work so hard. This was no adventure; it was enslavement! Now I have so many more questions to answer. Thank you; you’ve really opened up my eyes!”

LIGATURES

“My father always told me two things: You should become an engineer and you must play a musical instrument. It’s very important.”

Adam initiated his search for information about his father’s family claiming that he knew very little. He gave his father’s details and said that the family had probably lived somewhere near Rovno. They supposedly had a mill there. He recalled a visit to the town hall and remembered that his father had a lot of friends there and even a few relatives.

Adam found some more details in the archives that triggered his memory and opened up his family to him. Photos surfaced with undecipherable inscriptions on the back (in fact, a mix of Hebrew and Yiddish) and there were flashes of some details, e.g., there was a mourning period in the ’70s when all the mirrors in the house were covered: his father’s sister (unnamed) had died in Israel.

Right after the war, another family with the same surname had lived in their town. They were also from Rovno before the war. We soon established that that family had actually originated in Kovel, though they lived in Rovno. The father of Munish, the head of that other family, was a violinist. Thanks to archival documentation and other sources, we were able to construct a probable family tree showing that Munish and Adam’s father might well have been brothers.

When, after some time, we managed to locate Munish's daughter in Israel, she was amazed to hear that someone was still living in Wrocław. That's where she had lived until moving to Israel in 1951. "Really?" she said, "Someone with our name? That's great! I've been looking for so many years!" As of this writing, we still have to determine just how close the relationship actually is. But when we tell Munish's daughter what Adam's father used to say about how important it is to play a musical instrument, she begins to laugh. "That has to be my family. My father said the exact same thing to me all the time."

OLD SCHOOL TIE

One day, an older Polish man came to our office and introduced himself. He wasn't Jewish, he told us, but his best friend back in elementary school was. They had remained close for many years after primary school until, one day decades ago, his friend's family left Poland and moved to Israel.

For many years, the political climate was such that correspondence between Israel and Poland could cause certain undesirable repercussions for the party living in the Polish People's Republic. So contact gradually diminished and eventually came to a halt. Sometime in the early 1970s, our guest had an exceptional opportunity to spend a year in the United Kingdom. While there, our fellow renewed contact with his old friend ... only to lose it again upon returning to Poland. Now, decades later and in a free Poland, our guest wanted to find his friend again, but, to his great disappointment, he found that the address he knew was no longer valid. Could we help him find his best friend from school once again?

With the help of a Hebrew telephone directory and another database at our disposal, we located the Israeli within half an hour or so. By the end of the hour, the two were happily chatting on the phone and planning how to meet face to face.

Class dismissed.

FRUITFUL FOLLOW-UP

We record all inquiries that come our way and we consider our cases open at all times.

Should new information come to light — as is often the case — we contact our clients and update them with our newest findings.

Half a year ago, a gentleman came to visit us from California. He told us that his great-great-grandfather had had a firm producing kosher wines that, in all of Warsaw, were considered the most-trusted wines in the Orthodox and even ultra-Orthodox community. Such a firm, he was certain, must have been well-known throughout Warsaw and beyond. With that in mind, it was surprising and rather frustrating that, although we found other bits of information about the family, other than a very terse listing in a telephone directory, we were unable to find confirmation of the family firm, its products or its activities.

Until recently, that is. A new database has come on line of the Hebrew-language press. Of the many newspapers published, some were Zionist, some pro-

"Wow wow wow!!! You have been amazing. I thank you so much. The crazy thing is...all of a sudden, my father said he remembers visiting cousins in New York City. Can you imagine? He didn't remember till I asked if the name [you had given me] was familiar."

– D.W.S.,
Woodmere, NY, USA

"I again want to thank you and the organization for all the valuable and time-consuming work that you do and [I want you] to know that I, along with my family and friends of the survivor and Jewish communities, [am] extremely grateful for your extraordinary efforts on our behalf."

– S.G.,
Kensington, MD, USA

“Thank you very much for your quick response and for the time you shared with us when we visited. It is quite remarkable the information that you unearth. You are great detectives.”

– N.A.,
New York, NY, USA

“Words cannot express my gratitude. I am overwhelmed with emotion. Thank you so very, very much -- this is the finest gift. Thank you.”

– M. O.,
San Francisco, CA, USA

“Thank you very much. It was very exciting to get the Yahrzeit of my great-great-grandmother and great-great-great-grandfather, especially since they come out this month.”

– R.K.,
Los Angeles, CA, USA

“Many thanks for all the precious time you dedicated to us, for the valuable and important information, for the useful suggestions, for your kind welcome. I don't have the words to express our gratitude to you. Congratulations on your important work.”

– G.H.,
Beer Sheva, Israel

moted the Haskalah (or Hebrew Enlightenment), yet others were intended for an Orthodox readership. The tale of the “extra kosher” wine came to mind, so we did a search. Sure enough, we found a Hebrew advertisement for the “wine kosher enough for the most stringently observant” in an 1857 Warsaw Hebrew paper. The ad describes the wine, the source of its grapes, the manner of its production and the rigor of its rabbinic supervision. For good measure, it was signed by our client's great-grandfather and gave his home address, everything in essence that our client had hoped to confirm! And the search also turned up information about some Polish-Israeli cousins about whom he hadn't previously known. Our client was both shocked and pleasantly surprised upon opening his Skype account the next day.

A young woman came into our office bearing only her grandfather's school document listing him as “Roman Catholic.” For a number of reasons, she had begun to suspect that there was a camouflaged Jewish element to his biography. In a matter of moments, we located photos of her great-grandparents' traditional Hebrew gravestones in the Warsaw Jewish cemetery. To her delight, her hunch was verified, right on the spot.

On two separate occasions, plenipotentiaries of Jewish families seeking to regain a family property in Warsaw came in to ask if we could help establish the correct location of the family property. While they were pleased when we were able to do so rather quickly, they were amazed when we were able to tell them of yet other properties that their clients owned — but didn't even know about!

In one instance, Center staff saw a legal notice in the Warsaw paper in which the courts were seeking heirs to a property, title to which was still formally held by the obviously Jewish pre-war owner. As it happened, the heirs being sought were our former clients. We contacted the owner's granddaughter in Haifa and notified her of the unexpected development. Were it not for our call, she would never have learned of the property and it would have been forfeited automatically once six months had elapsed. Once she knew of the court announcement, she was at least in a position to explore her options. And the same was true several months later when yet another property owned by her grandfather surfaced in the legal notices.

MIGHTY OAKS FROM LITTLE ACORNS GROW

Everyone comes from somewhere; everyone — rich, poor, big, small, famous, infamous or relatively unknown — has a family to which they belong. While privacy law and our own confidentiality policy prevent us from naming our clients, we have had occasion once again over the last several months to serve a number of prominent individuals from various walks of life. For example:

- a leading Polish art critic and cultural figure, along with her cousins;
- a major figure in the media world today, formerly a leader of the Solidarity movement;
- the directors of major philanthropic foundations active in Europe, Israel and Australia;
- the director of a major international Jewish non-profit;
- one of the world's leading oncologists and his brother;

- a member of the British Parliament with his daughter; and
- the ambassador of a major Western country with his sister.

The great joy in meeting such notable individuals is that we get to meet them in the very personal, intimate context of their families. Their official persona falls away and we have relaxed, informal, very human conversations with them. And it is often quite fascinating to gain an understanding of how they came to be where and who they are today.

MINDING OUR OWN GARDEN

The Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center is a department of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute. As such, we function as an integral element of the Institute and we lend our expertise and assistance to our own in-house colleagues on many occasions. Some examples during this reporting period include:

- for the Institute Archives, identifying a Hebrew biblical quotation that appears in a survivor testimony so that an appropriate Polish translation could be found;
- for the Institute Art Department, reviewing and correcting the English-language captions for an upcoming exhibition;
- for the Historical Site Documentation Department, translating Yiddish inscriptions on photos and Hebrew texts for monuments, as well as identifying recovered Judaica publications.
- for the Institute as a whole, conducted a staff Chanukah program.

SOME TREES ARE JUST A LITTLE FRUITIER

Every story is fascinating in its own way, yet some queries seem just a bit quirkier than others. This semester once again, we had our share of unusual inquiries:

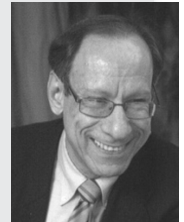
- a woman whose sole reason for thinking she might have Jewish roots was a dream that her neighbor had had;
- a man seeking biographical information on the Jewish navigator who perished in the crash of former Polish Prime Minister Gen. Sikorski's helicopter off Gibraltar during World War II (Internet research, coupled with a direct inquiry made of the Gibraltar Jewish Community, yielded an wealth of useful detail on British Warrant Officer Louis "Leibel" Zalsberg);
- a man researching a book on the Jewish ping-pong players of interwar Poland; and
- a woman writing a book on the origins of the traditional East European delicacy, the knish.

All in all, just a few more unremarkably remarkable months at the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center.

Respectfully submitted,
Ania & Yale

Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center Staff

Since 1994, Ania and Yale have been assisting individuals and families in uncovering unknown aspects of their family history and in locating long-lost family members — in some cases, even members of their immediate family.



In addition to receiving guests and responding to written queries from nearly every corner of the globe, they have lectured on genealogy-related topics at conferences, given workshops at Jewish cultural festivals and addressed audiences in synagogues and Jewish institutions across the U.S. and Canada, in both Eastern and Western Europe and in Israel. They serve as consultants to a range of institutions in Poland (e.g., courts, municipalities, press outlets and even the police), as well as assisting rabbinate in several countries, the Jewish Agency and the Israeli Prime Minister's Office in assessing the Jewish background of Polish citizens. The JG&FHC team have between them decades of experience, an excellent command of several languages and familiarity with many aspects of Polish Jewish history, culture and customs. They are at your service.



**The Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center
wishes to thank its donors for their generous support
over the last two years and moving forward:**

GIFTS OF \$100,000+

Friend Family Foundation
Jewish Community Endowment Fund of
San Francisco
The Morris W. Offit Family
Taube Foundation for Jewish Life &
Culture

GIFTS OF \$50,000+

Anonymous Donor, Jewish Family and
Children's Services of San Francisco
Susan and Moses Libitzky
Sigmund Rolat

GIFTS UNDER \$50,000

Joseph Bratspis
Eileen P. Clarke
Jacob Eilon
Corinne Evens
Naomi Granvold

Family of Yoel Halberstam
Shelley and John Hébert
Ittai Hershman
Larry Hochberg
Bracha Horowitz
The Javne Fund
Harvey Krueger
Mr. and Mrs. Philip L. Lapin
Evelyn and Leonard Lauder
Lucille and Henry Libicki
Caroline Miller
Jay and Marla Osborne
Michael Ronn
Marvin P. Schildkraut
Jeffrey Smith and Marc Smith
Shed Media US
Thomas Steinberg
Michael H. Traison Fund for Poland

For more information

Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute
Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center
ul. Tlomackie 3/5, 00-090 Warsaw, Poland
familyheritage@jhi.pl
(+48-22) 828-5962



TAUBE
FOUNDATION
FOR JEWISH LIFE
AND CULTURE

This report co-produced by the Jewish Genealogy & Family Heritage Center of the Emanuel Ringelblum Jewish Historical Institute, ul. Tlomackie 3/5, 00-090 Warsaw, Poland, and the Taube Foundation for Jewish Life & Culture, 121 Steuart Street, San Francisco, CA 94105
info@taubephilanthropies.org www.taubephilanthropies.org