





PRESERVE EDUCATE PROMOTE

"Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants (ASPJ) is dedicated to preserving and promoting the historical and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and to fostering understanding between current and future generations of the Polish and Jewish communities"

The ASPJ coordinates with the established Jewish and Polish communal bodies, religious leadership, governmental, parliamentary and diplomatic bodies, as well as historical, cultural and educational organisations in both Australia and Poland.

Polish–Jewish dialogue in Poland today is growing, particularly among the post-communist, educated young. There is a growing understanding and acceptance of the past, both the good and the bad. A new spirit of positive cooperation has emerged. Young Catholic Poles, more than ever before, are expressing an interest in the Jewish history of their country. This dialogue and interest needs to be nurtured and encouraged.

We organise educational and cultural events that cover the broad range of Polish–Jewish relations.

Our Haynt magazine is published three times a year, showcasing cultural, social and political articles of interest to Polish and Jewish communities.

ASPJ is a resource for educational material and offers a speaker service in a variety of topics relating to Polish–Jewish relations.

The Henryk Slawik Award is bestowed by the ASPJ to a person or institution that helps foster a deeper understanding of Polish–Jewish history and relations.

ASPJ Oration invites national or international speakers who can address complex and relevant issues regarding Polish–Jewish concerns.

Based in Melbourne and Sydney, Australia, we invite all people, Jewish and non-Jewish, whose roots lie in Poland, to join our organisation.

Disclaimer

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of ASPJ or its members.

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FROM THE PRESIDENT



Ezra May President ASPJ

Dzien dobry and welcome to our first edition of *Haynt* for 2022.

Although this time last year I expressed a similar sentiment, thankfully it now appears (primarily due to high vaccination rates), that after what seemed a long, continuous Covid impacted 2020 & 2021, we are now finally really beginning to emerge from the pandemic.

It is therefore with much excitement that the Australian Society of Polish Jews & their Descendants (ASPJ) is planning our 2022 calendar of events. In great anticipation, we are particularly thrilled to announce that Dariusz Popiela will be visiting Australia in September this year to deliver the 2022 ASPJ Oration.

Dariusz Popiela, as well as being an Olympian, World Championship medal winner and nine times Polish National Champion in white-water kayaking, remarkably, is also the founder of "People, Not Numbers" – a project commemorating Holocaust victims in local communities in the Nowy Sacz region of Poland.

The 2022 ASPJ Oration will also feature the Australian premiere of "The Edge of Light" – the story of the town of Czarny Dunajec regaining its memory of its former Jewish neighbours and residents. Dariusz Popiela was awarded the prestigious 2021 POLIN Award, and his inspiring accomplishments, beautifully crafted film and engaging personality ensures that this is certainly an event to look forward to.

Throughout 2022, the ASPJ will also be hosting a range of other events, continuing the positive momentum built in the past two years with our online Webinars, as well as other functions we are planning, including after its Covid delay, our ASPJ (NSW) chapter launch.

Pleasingly, since the last edition of Haynt, the ASPJ was able to host in December 2021, the 2021 Henryk Slawick Award as both an in-person and online event. It was a truly wonderful evening as we caught up with friends we hadn't seen for a while, heard wise words from our recipient Arnold Zable, and awarded Life Memberships to past ASPJ Presidents Bernard Korbman and Izydor Marmur.

Given current political events and the worsening civilian disaster, particularly so close to Poland's border, in the belly of Eastern European Jewry's historical homeland, our thoughts and prayers are firmly for the swift resolution of the worst European conflict and refugee crisis since World War Two. Although the scenes we are witnessing were perhaps unimaginable to many in 2022, it reinforces how precious and fragile peace & security is. It also further consolidates our Statement of Purpose "to preserve and promote the historical and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and to foster understanding between current and future generations of the Polish and Jewish communities." It is precisely through events and functions as facilitated by the ASPJ and our partner organisations in the Jewish, Polish & wider communities, that dialogue and relationships between different communities are formed. And it is through this that tolerance, respect and understanding, despite sometimes strong differing perspectives and views, is established and strengthened. And this only benefits us all.

We look forward to seeing as many of you as possible online and especially in person at our upcoming functions in 2022.

Best wishes for a safe & happy Passover.

Ezra May, President ASPJ

FROM THE NEW SOUTH WALES DESK



Estelle Rozinski Vice President

Dear Friends,

It's hard not to feel as though we are in a strange time warp...

Like many of you, my Polish roots are entwined with the shifting borders of the Ukraine. So many of our families' journeys have been impacted by pogroms and war.

Two of *Haynt's* poignant stories in this issue come from the Sydney branch of ASPJ. Lucy Taksa's story traverses borders, families and refugee shifts across the old USSR and Poland. Andrew Jakubowicz's story uncovers little known facts about prejudice and unexpected allies; Both narratives rely on the work of The Joint, which is significant in the back stories of many refugees, including, most recently, Ukrainians of all faiths. https://thejoint.org.au/donate/.

With plans to launch ASPJ NSW, we have decided to create a series of significant events to be held over the next few months. As part of our initial introduction the NSW team will host a webinar entitled "Jewish Poland and its role in the Ukrainian Refugee Crisis" to be held towards the end of May.

Additionally, the Sydney Jewish Museum will premiere the next two animations in the series "and he taught the canaries to sing" on Sunday 29 May. The Farber, created by Steven Durbach with music by Fem Belling, and The Healer, created by David Asher Brook, celebrate everyday aspects of pre-war Jewish Poland frequently overshadowed by the narrative of loss and destruction. Musicians will accompany this afternoon event, which promises to be as moving and transporting as the series' inaugural program.

Other events to look forward to later in the year include a September screening of the Dariusz Popiela film *Edge of Light*, which we are lucky to be hosting with Melbourne, through the generous sponsorship of the Wolf and Dora Memorial Fund. In November, Waverley Library Galleries and ASPJ will co-host a series of lectures on Polish-Jewish life past and present, as part of the library's public programming.

Please stay safe in these difficult times,

With warm regards, Estelle Rozinski, Vice President ASPJ.

VALE DAVID PRINCE

At the time of this Haynt issue going to print we mourn the passing of David Prince.

He was a much respected long-time member of our board and a friend to us all

David will be remembered for his valuable contribution to ASPJ, Holocaust education and his service to the Jewish community.



Ukraine Emergency Crisis Response



JDC (the Joint) is the largest Global Jewish Humanitarian Organisation, from rebuilding a shattered Europe after the Holocaust, to helping the fledgling State of Israel thrive. We have assisted Soviet Jewry, strengthen Jewish communities from Casablanca to Mumbai and beyond. We respond to natural disasters, supporting all communities and today we are supporting Ukrainian Jewry.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

Ukraine is home to some 200,000 Jews, 40,000 living under the poverty line, including 8,000 Holocaust survivors. Whilst the country is under full-scale attack, JDC The Joint is fully focused on protecting the wider Jewish community under fire, especially our most vulnerable clients.

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Youth HEAR Holocaust Education And Remembrace



Part of the Youth HEAR team at the 2022 Leadership Training Summit

By Julia Sussman Co-Founder and Managing Director

Nearly 18 months ago, Facebook banned Holocaust denial from the platform, officially classifying it as hate speech rather than misinformation. This shift from Facebook didn't happen overnight; it took over a decade of advocacy from groups like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to get the policy changed. Facebook successfully removed major Holocaust denial entities.

Despite this, Holocaust denial content remains on the platform and lives and grows on other social media platforms. Facebook banning Holocaust denial was a win and one we should be happy about; however, a 42% increase of online antisemitic incidents has been reported between 2020 and 2021. These numbers are alarming and seem to paint a clear picture – we cannot simply rely on a policy written in fine print to mitigate antisemitism and Holocaust denial online.

Our community holds a collective responsibility to ensure additional innovative measures are in place to actively combat Holocaust denial and, by extension, antisemitism. The youth of our community, the future leaders of our society, are being overwhelmed with Holocaust denial and antisemitism online, and the responsibility falls to us to help equip them with the tools necessary to call out and mitigate this hate speech.

Youth HEAR (Holocaust Education And Remembrance) is an organisation dedicated to mitigating hate in society by connecting young Australians with the memory of the Holocaust. Youth HEAR's mission is based on the Pyramid of Hate scheme produced by the ADL. This scheme demonstrates what happens if hatred is left unchecked at its most minor expressions. This concept is the foundation on which we built Youth HEAR. To fulfil our mission of mitigating hate, we must make sure every person is aware of where hatred can lead if left unchecked.

We put a strong focus on ensuring all of our work can exist and educate online. We employed our first paid role within Youth HEAR at the end of last year to ensure Youth HEAR continues to grow its online platform and reach. The Digital Consultant is responsible for ensuring Youth HEAR has a strong and reliable voice on social media platforms. This includes social media campaigns, educational posts and discussion forums. For us to reach the youth of our community, we have to build an online community. This is a crucial element of all the work Youth HEAR engages in.

One of the key drivers of our success is our incredible volunteer membership, which runs Youth HEAR. We have 28 young adults who spend countless hours educating themselves, connecting with Jewish and non-Jewish community members and leaders and creating unique and innovative ways for our young adult community to engage in Holocaust

commemoration and education. Our members engage in year-round education and training to further their own advocacy and leadership, and it is these 25 young adults who will then teach these lessons to another 25 people. This web of empowerment and advocacy training is how we will combat the alarming rise in online Holocaust denial, hatred and antisemitism

Youth HEAR is hosting its third annual Yom HaShoah commemoration on Tuesday 26th of April, at 7 pm. This year we are exploring the different mediums our community engages in to commemorate the Holocaust. We invite you to join us in honouring those who perished in the Shoah, applauding those who actively fought for the rights of their fellow humans and bearing witness to the testimony and resilience of those who survived. You can register for free tickets here: https://events.humanitix.com/youth-hear-yom-hashoah-commemoration-2022.

IN ONE VOICE



On Sunday 20 March 2022, the ASPJ was represented at the In One Voice, Jewish Cultural Street Festival in Elsternwick, Victoria.

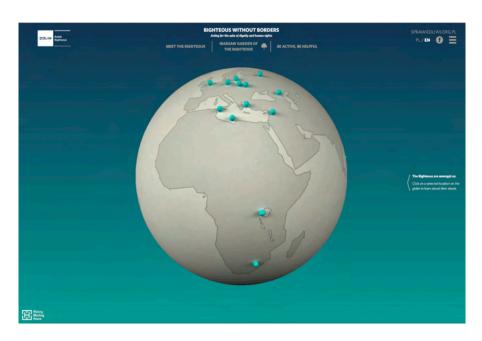
After an absence of two years due to Covid, thousands of members of the community came

together to experience In One Voice and increase familiarity with the wide diversity of Jewish community groups featured, as well as enjoying the food court and music stage offerings.

The ASPJ was popular with many attendees stopping past, inquiring about our activities, discussing our functions – highlights of which were featured at our table, and browsing through past editions of Haynt, which were also available. Many people expressed interest and support of the ASPJ, with some even signing up as members on the day.

Notable visitors, amongst many friends, included Polish Community Council of Victoria President Elizabeth Dziedzic, Victorian State MP David Southwick and our 2021 Henryk Slawick Award recipient Arnold Zable.

RIGHTEOUS WITHOUT BORDERS – NEW VIRTUAL EXHIBITION AT POLIN MUSEUM



POLIN Museum has launched a new virtual exhibition dedicated to people and organizations which are engaged in a struggle for human rights and human dignity. The exhibition's protagonists are the holders of the Righteous Among the Nations medal, and those awarded by the Garden of the Righteous Committee in the Wola district of Warsaw, but also people whose attitudes are closely related to the values promoted by the Righteous and may serve as a model and moral signpost for others. The exhibition was produced in cooperation with the History Meeting House.

The exhibition presents 28 people and organizations which – at different times and in various places around the globe – refused to remain helpless and took up the initiative. Their stories – illustrated by quotations and photographs – are linked by perseverance in acting for the benefit of others and the entire world. The Righteous' attitudes cross borders – they have universal dimension which goes beyond a specific time or nation.

"We created this exhibition to make people realize that the Righteous are among us. They extend a helping hand to others, especially to those in need. In the face of wars, crimes or terror, they defend human dignity and human rights. We do believe that each of us can discover a Righteous side to themselves," says Karolina Dzięciołowska, author of the exhibition "Righteous

Without Borders. Acting for the sake of dignity and human rights."

The notion of the Righteous refers to the title 'Righteous Among the Nations' coined by the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem which since 1963 has been presenting the title to those who had rescued Jews from certain death during the Holocaust. The Righteous – in a broader sense – is a person who, in different countries and at various times in most recent history, risked their lives or freedom to defend human dignity and human rights.

The exhibition "Righteous Without Borders. Acting for the sake of dignity and human rights" portrays people from all corners of the globe, i.e. Jan Karski, Nelson Mandela, Władysław Bartoszewski, Marek Edelman, David Nott, Antonia Locatelli or Rosa Parks. It draws attention to the contemporary Righteous who face the effects of the civil war in Syria and care about the fate of refugees. Amongst those presented in the exhibition are: the White Helmets, an organization rescuing victims of bombings in Syria, or Dr Pietro Bartolo, who welcomes and treats the refugees from Africa on the Italian island of Lampedusa.

Aside from promoting attitudes and values, the exhibition aims at inspiring its viewers to undertake initiative in the real world. "While working on the exhibition, we hoped to step beyond the virtual world and inspire our visitors to get involved in relief efforts. In the "Be active, be helpful" section we have posted information on organizations one should contact to support those who need our help the most today," says Klara Jackl, coordinator of the "Polish Righteous – Recalling Forgotten History" at POLIN Museum.

Supported from the Norway and EEA Grants by Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway.

https://www.polin.pl/en/news/2017/05/26/righteous-without-borders-new-virtual-exhibition-at-polin-museum

MOSHE RYNECKI (1881–1943). RECORDING THE LIFE OF HIS COMMUNITY







Self portrait In the shelter Refugees

Moshe Rynecki began drawing at an early age. According to family lore, he used to use chalk, or sometimes paint when he had some, to draw figures on the floor and walls of his home. According to a memoir written by his son, George, "Not once was he actually beaten for breaking the commandment, 'Thou shalt not create images.'" He once explained his drive to paint to his son. He told him, "God gave me talent and I truly don't believe in breaking that natural trend. I simply have to do it. If He wouldn't want me to paint, I wouldn't have that tremendous urge and desire to immortalize on paper or canvas what I see. I simply am a writer of sorts, instead of words, I leave my messages in pictures. I don't feel to trespass the Bible's saying about images."

Rynecki received little formal art education. Although he probably would have preferred to go straight to art school, he first had to complete his Jewish education at a yeshiva. He did this, and then went on to a Russian middle school, which was a prerequisite to acceptance at the Warsaw School of Fine Arts, which he attended for a brief period during the 1906-1907 school year.

After completing his formal education, Rynecki went on to paint that which he knew best; the community in which he lived. In paintings such as "The Chess Players" and "Woman Embroidering," he captured people doing everyday activities and in paintings such as "Simhat Torah," "Synagogue Interior," and "In the Study," his works capture places, events, and issues central to the Jewish community.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, Moshe became concerned about preserving his life's work. In the early days of the war he made the decision to divide his oeuvre of approximately 800 works into a number of bundles, and to hide them in and around Warsaw. He gave a list of the locations where the works were hidden to his wife, son, and daughter.

Moshe willingly went into the Warsaw Ghetto, desiring to "stay with his people".

Although he had little access to painting materials in the Ghetto, he did continue to paint. Only three paintings from this period of his life survived the Holocaust: "In the Shelter," "Forced Labor," and "Refugees."

His daughter was murdered in the Warsaw Ghetto. His wife, his son George, George's wife Stella, and their young son Alex hid in a number of locations outside the Ghetto and, despite a number of very close calls, ultimately survived the war.

After the war Moshe's widow went to see if any of the bundles of paintings survived. She found just a single package in the cellar of a home in Warsaw's Praga district, across the river Vistula.

For many years the Rynecki family believed that just this single bundle survived. Fortunately, that was not the case—many more pieces survived, and Moshe's great-granddaughter Elizabeth has found a substantial number of previously "lost" works over the last several years.



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Australian Society of Polish Jews and Their Descendants

BIRTHPLACES, EVACUATIONS AND MIGRATIONS:

complicated entanglements between past and present



Lucja Taksa, Wałbrzych.

By Professor Lucy Taksa

Memories of birthplaces, evacuations, escapes and migrations have become ever more poignant for me since the recent invasion of the Ukraine. As in previous times of upheaval and war, the effects are being felt in Poland and also far further afield here in Australia. At this time, we do well to recall our own transnational, historical, social, cultural and familial connections that are part and parcel of being of Jewish heritage rooted in Poland and Ukraine. For me this is very personal because although I was born in the small Polish city called Walbrzych, my family's roots span these interconnections. The resulting interplay of identities and affiliations is best summed up by what Professor len Ang referred to as 'complicated entanglements 1.

My mother's family originated in Poland. My grandmother, Dina Ponczek and her family came from Stanislwawow and Kaluszyn and my grandfather,

Symcha Ajzenfisz and his family from Okuniew. My maternal grandparents left Poland in the late 1920s for Paris and later settled in the Crimean city of Simferopol in the mid-1930s. My mother was born there in July of the following year. Five years earlier, in 1932, and just over 800km away, my father was born in Pavoloch (also known as Pavolitsh in Yiddish), a small town dominated by Jews in the Zhytomyr Oblast district of the Ukraine, 100 km southwest of Kyiv, where his mother's family originated. His father's family came from Khoderkov also in Zhytomyr Oblast. Importantly, both places had been governed by the Polish Kingdom centuries earlier ²

The lives of both sides of my family were altered forever by the Non-Aggression Pact between Germany and the Soviet Union (USSR), signed on 23 August 1939 ⁴. Yet, the relative safety of those living in the USSR during the early years of World War 2 was as short-lived as this Pact. The German invasion on 22 June 1941 not only affected my maternal grandparents and mother in Crimea, but also my father's family in the Ukraine ⁵. As part of Operation Barbarossa, the German forces penetrated the Crimean Peninsula in September 1941, and by January 1942 had occupied the Ukrainian borderlands. The war between the two nations lasted until May 1945, resulting in 26.6 million deaths, of which 18 million were civilians. The Soviet mobilisation of 36 million people included both of my grandfathers ⁶.

Rapid escape to eastern parts of the Soviet Union ensured the survival of my families. According to my mother, as the Nazi bombing neared Simferopol during the autumn of 1941, Symcha, Dina and Anna evacuated from Crimea avoiding the decimation of the 65,000 Jewish people who had been living there in 1939, which included the mass shooting of 5,000 Jews in Simferopol in December 1941 and another 5,000 by February 1942 ⁷. By this time, Symcha had been drafted into the Soviet Army and in 1945 he was part of the Soviet Liberation Forces of Poland.

Left alone, my grandmother Dina and her 4-year-old daughter, travelled over 1,315 km by bullock cart and train across the Caucasus mountains to Makhachkala in Dagestan. By the end of 1942 they had travelled another 129 km to the city of Derbent on the Caspian Sea. After



Ziema Taksa c.1940

a month of living and sleeping on the ground in a bomb shelter, Dina found a room for them, which they shared with refugees from other parts of the country. To survive, she sold second-hand clothes (known as shmates in Yiddish) at train stations. It was in Derbent that Dina met and partnered with Henryk Przednoweck, who had escaped from Łódź in Poland,

previously the second largest Jewish community in prewar Poland after Warsaw, just before the disastrous battle for that city occurred in the first week of September 1939, following the Nazi invasion of Poland ⁸. It is unclear why they chose to seek refuge in Dagestan. Perhaps it was its extremely heterogeneous population with over 40 different ethnicities and high numbers of Mountain Jews (or Gorskie Yevrei), who had been living there for centuries after migrating from Persia ⁹. As Light commented, 'Dagestan was simply too multicultural for ethnic cleansing or national sorting. Many credit this diversity for the Jews' survival'¹⁰.

The German invasion of the Ukraine also enmeshed my father's family who had moved to Kyiv a few years earlier. It was here that my grandfather, Ziema Taksa, one of his brothers and his nephew enlisted in the Red Army before the German occupation of Kyiv occurred between 7 August and 26 September 1941. By this time, 100,000 of the 160,000 Jewish inhabitants had



³ Ukrainian map including Crimea.

fled the city forming part of a massive eastward exodus.

My great grandmother Hannah Kotlar, grandmother Genia Taksa and her children, Cyla, Fima and Michal were among those who fled eastward, travelling some



Michal, Fima and Genia Taksa and Genia's mother Hannah Kotlar c.1948.

3,500km to the Kyrghyz Soviet Socialist Republic in the mountains of Central Asia, where they settled in Bistrovka (now named Kemin). In this way they escaped the Pavoloch massacre of 1,500 Jews on 5 September 1941 and the subsequent massacre of approximately 34,000 Jews remaining in Kyiv that occurred on 29 and 30 September at a ravine northwest of the city, known as Babi Yar ¹¹. After the war, my father returned to Kyiv with his mother, brother, and grandmother, where they discovered that my grandfather had been killed in the Battle of Stalingrad ¹².

Meanwhile, my father's sister, Cyla, travelled with her Polish born husband to Wałbrzych, a migration that was part of the resettlement of Poles and Jews who had survived the war in Soviet territories. Also part of this migration to Wałbrzych were my maternal grandmother, my mother, and her stepfather, in the spring of 1946.

In Walbrzych, my grandfather, Henryk, worked in the local coal mine, my grandmother bought and sold 'shmates' and my mother, Anna, attended a local school.

In 1957, after completing his military service, my father



Henryk and Dina Przednowek and Anna Ajzensisz, Wałbrzych, late 1940s

left the USSR to visit his sister in Walbrzych, where the Taksa and the Przednowek-Ajzenfisz families intersected, resulting in my parents' union and subsequently my birth.

Naming and names are a pivotal dimension of the identity entanglements experienced by many eastern European Jews, as my own multiple names attest. Although I was named Laja, after my great-grandmother, the Polish version of Lucia is the name inscribed on my Polish birth certificate, and on my Australian passport I am Lucy, thanks to the stroke of some anonymous Australian immigration official's pen. Throughout my childhood, I answered to all three, constantly aware of my heritage of multiple identities and migrations stretching over vast geographies of Poland, the Ukraine, Crimea and the Soviet Union. In this regard, my personal story resonates with that of my birthplace, which also experienced numerous name changes. Dating back to the 13th century, Wałbrzych is in Poland's southwest area of lower Silesia. Originally a Slavic settlement, it was incorporated into the Kingdom of Prussia in 1742 and later into Germany in 1871, becoming known as Waldenburg.

After the war ended, this city was affected by the border changes endorsed by the Potsdam peace settlement agreement signed by US President Harry S. Truman, British PM Winston Churchill and Soviet Premier Joseph Stalin. Waldenburg was transferred to Poland and its historic Polish name was resurrected. The German inhabitants were either expelled or fled to Germany ¹³. Walbrzych was then repopulated with Poles and Jews, who had survived the War in Soviet territories ¹⁴.

These historical developments, tragedies and stories of survival highlight the complicated entanglements between the personal and the political. The echoes of the past reverberate along with the bombing of Ukranian cities and the clammer of escaping souls to the Polish borderlands today during the unfolding crisis in the Ukraine and the Polish response to the people displaced by the Russian invasion.

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THE 2021 ASPJ HENRYK SLAWIK AWARD



Arnold Zable. Writer and human rights advocate

Extract from Ezra May's remarks about Henryk Slawik Award.

Welcome to the 2021 Australian Society of Polish Jews & their Descendants (ASPJ) Henryk Slawick Award.

The past two years of Covid uncertainty and instability have led to some concerning trends. It is easy to be discouraged as the world seems to have regressed with an apparent rise in intolerance, a return to nationalism and a rejection of a lot of the goodwill built between different people and communities. This is true in a national and international sense, with diplomatic spats between countries where so much progress was advanced.

However, perhaps optimistically, it is possible, as I prefer, to view this as a positive. It can be seen as a reaction to the success in fostering understanding and good relations between communities.

And that is why, despite the headwinds and challenges, which we do not shy away from, I continue to find the work of the ASPJ and similar oganisations so empowering and motivating.

It is the work that we do, at grass roots communal and high level governmental and diplomatic relations, that is very much on the front line of countering this trend. The ASPJ is an example of how by a focus on what we share in common and the benefits of cooperation, we are all better off.

The ASPJ Henryk Sławik Award is bestowed upon an individual who contributes to a greater understanding of the unique and dynamic contribution by the Polish Jewish community to the all-embracing Polish culture and ethos.

It is dedicated in memory of the great Polish diplomat, politician and humanitarian, Henryk Slawick, who saved several thousand Jews between 1940 and 1944, and was subsequently murdered by the Nazis in the Mauthausen concentration camp.



ASPJ president Ezra May presenting the Henryk Slawik Award to Arnold Zable

ASPJ LIFE MEMBERSHIP



Slawik Award recepient Arnold Zable, certificate of appreciation recepient Stephanie Gogos Polaron, Ezra May president ASPJ and Life Membership certificate recepients Izydor Marmur OAM and Bernard Korbman OAM

By Ezra May ASPJ President

Extracts of remarks about Life Members of ASPJ.

Bernard Korbman OAM

It is a great privilege but also challenge to talk about a past President of the ASPJ, Mr Bernard Korbman OAM.

There is plenty to say, so I thought I would skip the obvious, and instead relate some of the juicy bits.

But that proved an even greater challenge – as no one had anything bad to say about Bernard. At least not on record.

As most here know, Bernard was the single most fundamental factor in the establishment, formation and growth of the ASPJ. Indeed, for many people in the Jewish, Polish & wider general community, Bernard was and remains the embodiment of the ASPJ and the living exemplar of its ideals.

Personally, Bernard was all that for me and more. As Bernard is entirely responsible for my involvement and all the education, entertainment and satisfaction the ASPJ has provided.

At the conclusion of attending my first ASPJ event, despite never having met before, Bernard approached me, introduced himself and then welcomed me aboard. All that, before I had time to introduce myself back, or wriggle my arm free from the not-so-subtle twist he was applying. Those familiar with Bernard's charismatic



ASPJ president Ezra May presenting Life Membership certificate to Bernard Korbman OAM

and intoxicatingly captivating personality wouldn't be at all surprised.

Participating in a meeting, engaging in a discussion or attending a presentation with Bernard was always a delight, on so many levels. Every occasion, I learnt something, laughed at something, but most importantly observed how to behave. It is Bernard's ability to analyse a situation and determine how to act with just the right calibration of tolerance, respect, forcefulness and conviction that was my greatest lesson.

No issue or challenge was ever too difficult and, when it was required, Bernard displayed the strength to remain true to his values & ideals.

Bernard also has the enviable ability to relate to all sorts of people, be they an elderly Holocaust survivor, visiting Polish Parliamentarian, intellectual academic, or young 3rd generation kid just exploring his heritage. Bernard has time for everyone and treats everyone with due respect.

In a totally inadequate summation, Bernard, thank you for establishing and everything you have contributed to the ASPJ. It is a great honour to present you with your certificate of Life Membership of the ASPJ.

The challenge for us is to continue to further our mission to preserve and promote the historical and cultural heritage of Jewish life in Poland and to foster understanding between current and future generations of the Polish and Jewish communities.

We are confident though that based on the platform built by Bernard and by following the direction and path he forged, the ASPJ is well placed to do so.

Izydor Marmur OAM

If Bernard is rightly regarded as a founding father of the ASPJ, Izi Marmur OAM should be regarded as just as instrumental.

Izi, has been on the ASPJ journey from the beginning, being part of the initial team formed by Bernard.



Izydor Marmur OAM receiving Life Membership Certificate from ASPJ president Ezra May.



Although not as comfortable at commanding an audience and owning the stage as Bernard, Izi has played a key part in the ASPJ in two distinct, yet fundamentally important, areas.

The friendships, relationships and connections lzi formed, particularly with leaders of the local Victorian Polish community, was of critical importance to the successful establishment of the ASPJ. It is lzi's ability to straddle both communities and be that link, especially early on, that was the key to the ASPJ developing.

Additionally, Izi's professional production of our newsletter *Haynt* greatly increases the reach of the ASPJ, both nationally and internationally. Izi not only produces our newsletter, but also the graphics publicising our events.

Without Izi, the ASPJ would struggle to make an impact with not only the local Polish community, but also in the nationally and internationally crowded webinar market. The clarity and professionalism of his designs goes a long way in making our Webinars and events an attractive proposition.

Indulgently, a highlight for the ASPJ was the awarding of a Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) to Izydor Marmur in the 2021 Queen's Birthday Honours List for "service to the Jewish community" highlighted by his two terms as President of the ASPJ for a total of six years, as well as being Vice-President for three.

It is a great honour to present Izi with certificate of Life Membership of the ASPJ.

RELUCTANT AUTHORITY:

how Australia provided refuge to the Sugihara survivors of 1941



By Dr Andrew Jakubowicz FRSN FASSA

Emeritus Professor of Sociology University of Technology Sydney

In January 1941 the Polish ambassador in Tokyo, Tadeusz Romer, approached his colleague, the Australian Minister John Latham, to ask for help. The first of hundreds and what later would be thousands of Polish refugees

were arriving in Japan from Russia, many with nowhere else to go. While the Tokyo government had accepted the ten day transit visas that many of the refugees held, provided mainly by the Japanese vice-consul Chiune Sugihara in Kaunas in Lithuania, it was clear to all concerned that their documents, noting no visas were required to enter the Dutch West Indies (Curacao and Surinam), would get them no further. In Kobe where most halted, the Jewish Joint Committee struggled to find them entry to the USA and other countries in the western hemisphere.

Romer had a proposition for Latham and his British Dominion colleagues from Canada and the United Kingdom. The British ambassador was most supportive and urged on his colleagues the importance of acceding to Romer's request. Romer needed to have their governments accept about 400 of the refugees as soon as possible so that the places they were using in Japan could be freed up for the lines of refugees known to have been given exit permits by the Soviets, but yet to arrive. Would Latham ask his government to take some of them?

Australia had already expressed opposition to accepting Polish Jewish refugees. In 1939 a report to the government by the Interior Department's Thomas Garrett had warned that the Polish Jews were "the poorest specimens outside blackfellows that I have seen". In July 1940, as the Polish Jews in Lithuania were lining up to receive their transit visas from Sugihara, the

Australian government had instructed its High Commission not to issue transit visas to German and Polish Jews then in London seeking refuge in Shanghai, whom it feared might remain in Australia.

Romer had prepared a report on the arrival of the Polish Jews in Japan, an extraordinary document which acknowledged the role of both Sugihara and his Dutch colleague honorary consul Jan Zwartendijk in facilitating the escapes. Latham noted that the Australian government had problems in relation to these refugees, namely that it was reluctant to accept any refugees from countries occupied by the Germans. Romer offered to prepare a scheme that would mollify the Australian fears, which Latham could send to Canberra.

In essence, Romer, in conjunction with the Joint and other Jewish groups in Japan, would select and vouch for "good types," to a total of 66 primary entrants.

These would be made up of people who were not



Polish ambassador in Tokyo, Tadeusz Romer

politically suspect, had relatives or sponsors in Australia, or would be financially supported by the Joint, were not required for army service or would volunteer when they reached Australia if suitable, could make an economic contribution to Australia. Moreover they would be returned to Poland at the end of the war with all costs paid for by the Polish government.

Over the succeeding months the Australian Cabinet considered the proposition. The further argument was made to them by Romer and the Polish consul in Melbourne (who was in close contact with London and Romer in Tokyo) that taking these refugees would be a great favour to the gallant small nation of Poland, a British ally whose government in exile was forming military units in Canada to which many of the male refugees would be sent. Australia would be remembered as a friend if it did take these small numbers and be regarded as churlish if it did not.

At the end of March Romer told Latham that the Polish government representatives in London had met with PM Menzies who was there for an Empire War Cabinet, to press the case for Australia taking Polish refugees from Japan. Romer's hope was that the Australian government would agree, before Menzies left to return to Australia. The Australian Cabinet on 9 April agreed to provide refuge for 66 of the Poles, "as a gesture to Poland" and "as a practical demonstration of both appreciation and sympathy", with the qualification that "it was not desired effect should be given to the decision if it could be avoided". On 10 April External Affairs Minister P. Spender noted that Latham be advised to proceed, "but we are not enamoured of the suggestion". On 11 April "reluctant authority" was given to Latham in Tokyo to select refugees for admission. As Garrett reflected in a note, Spender's reservation placed "this Department [of Interior] in a dilemma in view of pressing representations by local Jewish organizations as well as enquiries by the Polish Consul-General, who had evidently received communications from the Polish Minister in Japan on the subject".

Despite every attempt by the Australian government to avoid taking the refugees, they began to arrive on Japanese ships from July 1941. In October the Japanese withdrew recognition of the Polish embassy, and Romer left for Shanghai. The remainder of the Polish Jews in Japan who had not been able to escape were sent to Shanghai, with Romer still trying to get further places for them in Australia. The new Labor Government after September 1941 did not prevaricate as much as had the Menzies coalition, but

circumstances made if far more difficult to arrange landing permits for people trapped in Shanghai.



Chiune Sugihara

Ultimately just over eighty Polish Jews arrived from Japan during 1941, holding landing permits and sponsorships by Jewish organisations, particularly Australian Jewish Welfare, with landing money provided by wealthy community patrons such as Leon Fink and Jacob Waks. Another dozen or so

arrived from Shanghai later in the year (most in November) without landing permits, with Australia planned as a transit point to other countries. Some went on directly to New Zealand but most of them were trapped in Australia for the duration, registered as aliens.

In November 2021 the National Archives of Australia published a story titled 'Sugihara survivors' to its digital wall in the *Connections* exhibition at the National Office in Canberra. The story encompasses archival records and images of some of the families who were Sugihara visa holders to Japan. Tracing their stories in 1941 and later in 1946–47, reveals the contradictions of an Australia prejudiced against Jewish foreigners yet more fearful of being shamed before the British.

At a time of war again in Europe on some of the same bloodlands from where these refugees fled over eighty years ago, it is sobering to remember how countries as distant as Australia can help ensure the survival of the scattered remnants of families from a world away.

This article has been prepared with the help of the National Archives of Australia, and draws on the digitised files on Polish Jewish refugees from Japan held in the A433 series. It is based on research for a chapter "Escape through the East" in a forthcoming book on the Holocaust and Australia. Readers are invited to visit the National Archives when they are in Canberra, to explore the stories of the Sugihara survivors.

Andrew Jakubowicz is a descendant of Sugihara survivors whose family members arrived in Australia in 1941 and 1946.

DID YOU KNOW?

Leo Weiser Port



Born: 1922 Died: 1978

Profession: Engineer, Inventor

Terms served on Council

Alderman: City of Sydney 1969 to1978

Lord Mayor City of Sydney: 1975 to1978

Family background

Leo Weiser Port was born on 7 September 1922 at Cracow in Poland, son of a poulterer Aron Rappaport and his wife Leia, née Amsterdamer. On 25 October 1950, at the Temple Emmanuel, Woollahra, Sydney, he married Edith Bertha, German-Jewish daughter of Dr. OM Lucas, and had three sons and one daughter. He died in office at the age of 55 on 26 August 1978, survived by his wife. More than a thousand people attended his memorial service at Sydney's Great Synagogue on 1 September. He was buried in the Jewish section of Rookwood Cemetery.

Occupation & interests

Leo Port was educated at the Adass Yisroel Realgymnasium in Berlin and, with his family, fled to Prague and then Sydney, arriving as a refugee on 24 March 1939. He attended Parramatta High School and Sydney Boys High before graduating from the University of Sydney in mechanical and electrical engineering. He was naturalised in 1945, taking the surname Port. In 1947, he joined the firm of Donoghue & Carter, becoming a partner in 1953. Another partner was fellow alderman Herbert Gordon Carter. From 1969 to 1976, Leo Port was a member of the State Planning Authority. He was a

director of Manufacturing Investment Ltd and WG Watson & Co Pty Ltd. Port won the Prince Philip Prize for Australian Design in 1969 for a lift control system he developed. He also achieved a public profile as a panellist on the ABC television program The Inventors. He was a patron of the Moore Park Golf Club and founding member of Monash Country Club.

Community activity

Leo Port was active in the cultural life of Sydney's Jewish community. From 1955 to 1966, he was the Temple Emanuel's delegate to the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies and was active in the Jewish National Fund, which raised funds for Israel. The Leo Port Sydney Park at Tel Aviv was established by the Jewish National Fund of NSW in 1978.

Honours & awards

Leo Port was awarded an MBE in 1974.

Local government service

Leo Port was Alderman for Fitzroy Ward, 27
September 1969 to 26 August 1978. He was a
member of the Works Committee, 1969-74 and its
Chairman in 1974, the City Planning and
Improvements Committee, 1969-74, the Finance
Committee and the Community Services Committee
in 1975. Port was also the Vice-Chairman of the
Martin Place Sub-Committee, 1969-74 and Chairman
of the Festival of Sydney Committee. Port was Lord
Mayor, 1975-78 and Deputy Lord Mayor in 1974-75.
It was during his mayoralty that the Council won the
Bluett Award for the greatest relative progress in the
field of community services during the previous
year. He was a member of the Civic Reform
Association.

References

Shirley Fitzgerald, 'Port, Leo Weiser (1922–1978)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/port-leo-weiser-11444/text20397, accessed 6 December 2012.

Australian Jewish Historical Society Archives

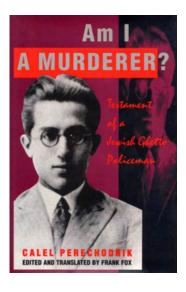
City of Sydney Archives: Aldermen's Files; Photos: CRS 80/230; 80/262; THC 88/352; 88/766 and AF; SRC770

Society of Australian Genealogists: Rookwood index

BOOK REVIEW

By Adam Warzel

Member of Australian Institute of Polish Affairs



Am I a Murderer? Testament of a Jewish Ghetto Policeman

by Calek Perechodnik

According to the book's publisher*, Testament is regarded by many historians as the most significant first-hand account of the Holocaust. Its author, Calek Perechodnik, was merely 27 when he wrote it while hiding on the Aryan side of Warsaw in 1943.

Testament has a form of diary but it can also be treated as memoir since parts of it were written several months after the events he describes.

Perechodnik is the person tormented by guilt. As the Jewish policeman based in the ghetto of Otwock, a small town near Warsaw, he brings his wife and twoyear old daughter to the layover yard from which they, together with thousands of other Otwock Jews, are transported to Treblinka death camp. He is led to believe by his superior, the Ghetto Police commander, that both will be released on his order. Neither ever returns. Not only have I lost her, writes Perechodnik referring to his wife, but I was left with the realisation that I was her executioner who led her to her death (AW trans.). He is forever tormented by the thoughts that his daughter could have been saved had he agreed to place her with the Polish family he knew and trusted. Testament is his posthumous gift to his beloved wife Anna. It is a form of her resurrection so she is forever remembered by those who read the book.

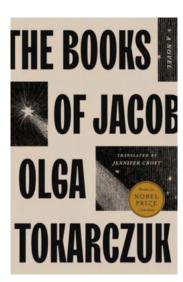
Perechodnik's prose is flawless. His immersion in the Polish culture complete. His frequent citations of Polish poetry points to erudition and solid education he received. Yet, what some readers will find surprising and confronting is his portrayal of the Christian Poles and their behaviour and attitude towards their Jewish brothers and sisters. This depiction is devastating. Apart from some noble but rare examples, Poles in the eyes of Perechodnik are duplicitous and treacherous. I don't want to write anything bad about Poles but overall it is a greatest disappointment in my entire life. For 26 years I have lived among them and only in the last year I got to know their true face... Referring to his father's tragic end while seeking shelter on the Aryan side, he writes: And maybe you yourself are guilty of your own death?... you deluded yourself that if someone had a good look, was legally registered, one had to survive the war...but you did not take one factor into account. A silent and nameless human malevolence. not malice which hunts a Jew for 1000 zloties but one which wants to destroy him, one that turns him in into German hands (AW trans.).

It is apparent that whatever strengths, physical and psychological, Perechodnik possessed, he used them entirely for his own survival. There was no space for anything else. Unsurprisingly, he rarely talks about issues that go beyond the realm of survival. The consequence of it is that many historically important events taking place in Warsaw at the very same time, somehow escape his attention. There is no reference, for example, to the Warsaw Ghetto uprising (1943), this ultimate manifestation of Jewish heroism in the face of monstrous adversity. Instead, reflecting on Jews seeking shelter, Perechodnik laments about their naivety and timidity. There is also no mention about Poland being one of the very few European countries where retribution for hiding Jews was death, which would enable readers to better understand complex human relations described by him. This is not a criticism of this extraordinary book but an observation which reveals a lot about the diabolical set of circumstances he found himself in.

Perechodnik perished in the ruins of Poland's capital, sick and emaciated, a year after finishing his diary. The circumstances of his death are unclear. In

1944, he took part in the second Warsaw Uprising, fighting as soldier of the Home Army. The original of the diary is kept by Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

* Published by KARTA and Jewish Historical Institute, Warsaw, 2016. The Polish title of the book is "Spowiedź" - Confession. The book is also available in English, Hebrew and other languages.



The Books of Jacob

by Olga Tokarczuk

In less than two weeks after its release in early February, Olga Tokarczuk's opus magnum *The Books of Jacob* has become one of the most popular titles on the US book market. Is it surprising? Not really. The Polish author has a well established reputation in America, having won the International Bookers Prize for her *Flights* in 2018. A year later she won the Nobel Prize in Literature, further consolidating her position as one of the most interesting writers of the 21st century.

So what is the book about? On its 1000 pages, The Books tell the story of the Jewish sect Frankists and its charismatic, messianic leader, Jacob Frank. The Frankists, established in the mid 18th century in Podolia (then south-eastern part of Poland, today western Ukraine), was an anti-talmudic sect which at its height had up to 50,000 followers, mainly in Poland but also in Central Europe. They rejected main tenets of Judaism and were notorious for bending the rules of sexual ethics. But it was their conversion to Christianity that made Frankists the subject of often violent attacks by angry traditionalists, leading to major ruptures within Jewish communities.

The story, as told by Tokarczuk, has many twists and

turns but it ends up in Offenbach in Germany, where Frank died in 1791.

The book, which took seven years to write and as many to translate into English, is a beautifully crafted panorama of the world long forgotten and of which we know very little today. It does not have a strong, gripping plot, and at times looks more like a chain of interconnected vignettes. However, it describes with meticulous attention to detail, erudition and sophistication of language, life in the 18th century Poland: customs, costumes, beliefs, ethnic and religious phobias.

There are many angles from which one can look at this book. Foremost, it gives a fascinating insight into the place Jews held in Poland, particularly their relations with Polish aristocracy, peasants and the Catholic Church. But the journey of Frankists also reminds us of the upcoming Jewish Enlightenment, Haskalah, and the dilemmas many Jews faced about assimilation.

The book may also be seen as the hymn to diversity. Does anyone speak Polish here?...They say it's one kingdom, a united Commonwealth, but here everything is completely different... observes one of the main characters comparing two regions of the country. It's worth remembering that Poland, which emerged from the ruins of the Second World War as a homogenous country, rarely possessed this characteristic in its history. At the turn of the 18th and 19th centuries, the country was anything but homogenous. Poles, Jews, Germans, eastern Slavs, Armenians and others lived within its borders. It was a mosaic of many different colours that shone with rare intensity. Tokarczuk's book does justice to this incredible mosaic.

The Books of Jacob is a product of painstaking research into Jewish mysticism and the history of Jewish presence in Poland. It is the book that can't be overlooked by anyone interested in these topics.

The Books of Jacob, translated from Polish by Jennifer Croft, Publisher: Text Publishing Company, November 2021, available in most Australian bookshops.

COMING UP IN SEPTEMBER. DARIUSZ POPIELA PRESENTS 2022 ASPJ ORATION



Photo: Dariusz Popiela archives.

"People, Not Numbers" involves local schools, youth groups and communities in learning about the history of the local Jewish communities and former residents of their hometowns, ultimately becoming patrons of the memorial sites.

Dariusz Popiela won the prestigious 2021 POLIN Award for preserving the memory of over 5,000 Holocaust victims from Krościenko nad Dunajcem, Grybów, Czarny Dunajec and Nowy Targ.

The 2022 ASPJ Oration will also feature the Australian premiere of the film *The Edge of Light* – the story of the town of Czarny Dunajec in the south of Poland regaining memory of its Jewish neighbours.

Dariusz Popiela, Polish Olympian, World Championship medal winner and nine times Polish National Champion in white-water kayaking is coming to Australia in September 2022 to deliver the 2022 ASPJ Oration.

As well as being a world class athlete, Dariusz is also the founder of *People, Not Numbers* – a project commemorating Holocaust victims in local communities in the Nowy Sacz region of Poland. My purpose in this project is to strive toward mutual respect and understanding, toward a reconciliation. For a long time, these words had seemed empty slogans to me. I had no idea that one day I will organize the ceremony that will turn those words into real actions.



FACEBOOK COMMUNITY MEMORIAL PAGES

By Peter Schnall

My father and mother both survived the Holocaust. My children constantly asked me about my parents, having never met their grandmother who passed away when I was very young, and having lost their Grandpa when they were very young.

In response, I decided to turn my mind to providing answers to "who was Grandpa, Pap?".

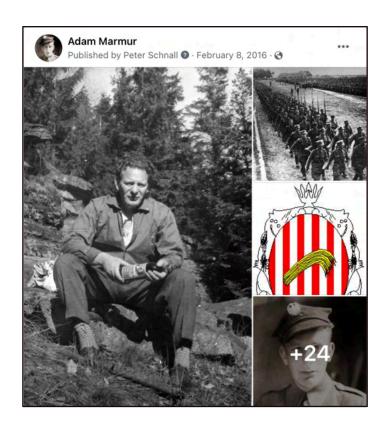
What was I to do? Could I produce a web page with a photo album? This option seemed to get the most interest and, most importantly, attracted involvement from the children.

It needed to be 'set and forget, although editable', long lasting/permanent and 'paid for'.

Facebook community pages seemed the best option.

I already had a Facebook page for the Cracow Memorial Committee, which is a site to annually commemorate the destruction of the entire Jewish community of my father's home town of Cracow, Poland.





This new page was to be just about my father.

If only he were alive so that I could work on it together with him.

This led me to turn to survivors who were still alive and had known my father throughout their lives.

I could ask questions and cover the topics of a lifetime, including the Holocaust, clarifying and respecting any important concerns such as privacy and their dignity after what they had been through.

To get an idea about what I could achieve using social media to create a fan page about a person proved harder to explain than I had initially anticipated.

After all, social media has had a bad rap as of late, what with fake news, lack of – or too much censorship and what not.

Notwithstanding these barriers posed by infamous attitudes towards Facebook and Mark Zuckerberg, which occasionally derailed my conversation completely, this is what I found:

Each survivor I got through to was a unique individual.



Many had written, or were writing memoirs, and there were also numerous 'breadcrumbs' of links to articles, books, videos and other media already on the Internet that could be gathered together in one place.

Others already had a Facebook page, although I was able to distinguish my project pages as they were dedicated to a part of their lives which generally was too hard to think about, let alone devote work and time to creating, which I would put together quickly primarily for them and their loved ones, wherever they were located around the world.

They respectively carried strong, yet very different feelings and views with them about the Holocaust, which at the time was decades behind them, yet so very present in every powerful word they spoke.

To date, I only have a handful of pages, listed below to complete this story – for now.

Many pages are on Facebook for a loved one, and every time I search, I am finding more memorial pages on Facebook which is very pleasing to see.

Here are the links to the pages:

1. David Prince:

https://www.facebook.com/DovidPrince/?ref=bookmarks
For more direct link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eo0MlsZrlfA

2. Ursula Flicker:

https://www.facebook.com/UrsulaFlicker/?ref=bookmarks

3. Henri - Heinrich Korn:

https://www.facebook.com/Henri-Heinrich-

Korn-971561472964602/?ref=bookmarks

For more direct link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mz6t4OJ_Uw

4. Halina Zylberman:

https://www.facebook.com/Halina-

<u>Zylberman-471393709730925/?ref=bookmarks</u>

5. Abe - Abram Goldberg:

https://www.facebook.com/Abe-Abram-

Goldberg-826937410750779/?ref=bookmarks

For more direct link:

https://www.abc.net.au/radio/canberra/programs/drive/awm-

holocaust-display/

8080454?fbclid=lwAR14PFJSzuk23P_ek2fyRhr-

rnvmUdcQPm-nEYdPpaCVscYHnEP6EtwKjjk

6. Wilhelm - Willek Lermer:

https://www.facebook.com/Wilhelm-Willek-

Lermer-1668046843483895/?ref=bookmarks

7. Phillip – Falk Maisel:

https://www.facebook.com/Phillip-Falk-

Maisel-859530070803425/?ref=bookmarks

8 Sholem - Salo Fischer

https://www.facebook.com/salofischer/?ref=bookmarks

10. Adam Marmur:

https://www.facebook.com/Adam-

Marmur-1035484739807876/?ref=bookmarks

11. Hannah Sweetman:

https://www.facebook.com/Hannah-

Sweetman-947574742028933/?ref=bookmarks

12. Juzek Gross:

https://www.facebook.com/Jozef-Gross-786340748404693/

13. Cracow Memorial Committee of Melbourne:

https://www.facebook.com/

 $\underline{CracowMemorialCommitteeofMelbourne/?ref=bookmarks}$

Note:

- * You do not need to join Facebook to be able to view the pages
- * If the links do not work properly, please use your favourite search engine for the person using the spelling provided (including full name and dashes if included) my Facebook page for them should be in the search results.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

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PO Box 56, Elsternwick VIc 3185 Australia t: (613) 9532 9573 e: Ifiszman@bigpond.net.au www.polishjews.org.au