

child survivors of the holocaust

CONNECTIONS

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Dear Child Survivors,
We trust that you and yours are well. I am preparing this edition of *Connections* on the eve of **October 7th**. I can only hope and pray by the time this newsletter goes out early November that the peace

negotiations were miraculously successful.

Thank you all again for your incredible support for the anthology, there is no doubt the Child Survivor Melbourne group is as strong as ever.

In this edition we feature an article about the **Children's Homes in France during the Holocaust**.

Also, a fascinating travel story by **Dr George Deutsch OAM** about when he and his family returned to Vienna by special Invitation from the 'Jewish Welcome Service'.

Claude Sanicki has written about his famous/ infamous meeting with **Ronnie Biggs** of "The Great Train Robber" fame. Claude has certainly proven he is a "Fund Raiser Extraordinaire!"

Ruth Scheuer OAM recalls an important memory from her Holocaust past with a strong message to us all.

Dear CSH, if you have any thoughts or stories, notice of a special birthday or the sad news of the passing of one of our CSH group, please don't hesitate to let us know: viv.parry@bigpond.com or lena@lenafiszman.com.

Wishing everyone the best possible Chanukah,

Viv Parry & Lena Fiszman
Co-Presidents



From Lena's Desk:

Children's Homes in France during the Holocaust

Yad Vashem. The World Holocaust Remembrance Center

One of the unique phenomena of the Holocaust period was the rescue of Jewish children in France: a network of protective homes established by different organizations, both Jewish and Christian, whose members rescued children and brought them to remote places, in order to protect them from persecution and enable them to live a normal life under abnormal circumstances. Thanks to this rescue endeavour, thousands of Jewish children were saved. This is a story of courage and determination, a story of sacrifice, loyalty and dedication.

This exhibition tells the story of three children's homes: the home in **Chamonix**, the home in **Izieu**, and the home in **Chabannes**.

On the eve of World War II there were approximately 330,000 Jews living in France. Following the German occupation of France in June 1940, many Jews were arrested and interned in concentration camps – initially inside France, but in spring 1942 there started the first deportations of Jews to camps in Germany and Eastern Europe. At first, most of the Jews incarcerated were immigrants without French citizenship who had arrived from Eastern Europe in the 1920s and 1930s, and refugees who had fled from Nazi Germany. Gradually,

however, the French police and the German authorities also started arresting French Jews. Mass arrests of Jews in Paris and in the German Occupied Zone began in early 1941. From summer 1942, arrests also began to take place in areas of France not under German control but under the authority of the collaborationist "Vichy Regime". By the time that France was liberated in the summer of 1944, some 77,000 Jews had been arrested and deported to extermination camps in Eastern Europe.

In response to the persecution of the Jews, many in France – Jews and non-Jews alike – became active in hiding Jewish children who were at risk of deportation. Several organizations were central to these rescue



The 3 Einhorn sisters at the children's home in Chamonix, winter 1943-1944



Members of the children's orchestra performing at the Château de Chabannes children's home, 1941.

operations:

The Children's Aid Society - OSE (Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants) maintained children's homes with the financial assistance of the American Joint Distribution Committee and French Jewish communal organisations. The directors and staff at these homes were idealistic young men and women, both Jewish and non-Jewish, who treated the children in their care with affection and tenderness. OSE activists would enter the detention camps of their own free will, in order to make contact with the children and their parents and gain their trust and eventual consent to attempt to smuggle the children out of the camps and bring them to OSE homes and other hiding places. Members of the Jewish Scouts of France - EIF (The Eclaireurs Israelites de France), established by Robert Gamzon, did similar work. Gamzon was active in the Union of French Jews - UGIF (Union Generale des Israelites de France) which was established during the Holocaust. After the roundups of summer 1942, he set up a rescue organization called "the Sixth" (Sixieme) whose members also took Jewish children into hiding in children's homes. The "Amelot Committee" organization (Rue Amelot), founded by David Rappaport, and the Zionist Youth Movement - MJS (Mouvement de Jeunesse Sioniste) operated in the same way. One of the repercussions of the German Occupation was the abrupt cessation of the hidden children's education – both Jewish and general – and they were forced to start studying clandestinely. In an effort to compensate for this, the children's homes offered a wide range of social and educational activities, despite the meagre resources

at the staff's disposal. They did everything in their power to continue the children's Jewish and general education, and to enable a sense of routine and normalcy. Staff members even took the children on outings, mainly in rural and mountainous areas where the danger of being discovered was lower. Many of the children who survived thanks to these children's homes remember their rescuers fondly, recalling their efforts to create a loving, supportive and protective environment. In a reality where the children were alone, vulnerable and terrified of being hunted down, and in a world where so many of those around them were either indifferent or actively hostile, there were also individuals who watched out for them and tried to save them. Many of the non-Jewish rescuers of these children were later recognized by Yad Vashem as Righteous Among the Nations.



Children and counsellors at the children's home in Izieu, summer 1943.

There were children's homes throughout occupied France, but mainly in the South of France. Some were near the borders with Spain and Switzerland. Many of the rescuers tried to take Jewish children and even babies out of detention camps and other dangerous areas in France to safety in children's homes. From these homes, many Jewish children were eventually smuggled out of France. Thousands of Jews and non-Jews risked their lives to save Jewish children in France during World War II.

Yad Vashem.

The World Holocaust Remembrance Center

A very Moving Week in Vienna

Jewish Welcome Service Vienna Tour – April 2025

Dr George Deutsch OAM



Austrian President, Dr Alexander Van der Bellen with Dr George Deutsch OAM and family.

Early this year I received an all-expenses-paid invitation to visit Vienna, the city of my parents' birth. It came from the Jewish Welcome Service (JWS), an organisation funded by the City of Vienna. JWS was established some 40 years ago with the mission of reconciling people affected by the Holocaust with their former hometown. The JWS now extends this opportunity to descendants of these people.

My parents fled Vienna in 1938 and my first reaction to the invitation was 'no way'. My strong memories of my parents' very negative attitude towards Austria did not make a visit to Vienna attractive and I couldn't help wondering how they would feel about me accepting this invitation. However, my daughters and grandchildren persuaded me that it might lay some ghosts. The visit was made even more special as my wife and I were accompanied by one of our daughters, her husband and a granddaughter.

The week's program proved to be fascinating. The 37 participants came from Israel, England, America, Argentina and Australia. The group shared an intense, emotional and stimulating experience. We mingled informally and shared our stories, visited museums and Holocaust memorials and were shown around the areas where our ancestors had lived. Every effort was made to show us that Austria fully accepts its collective guilt and that 'never again' is taken very seriously.

Our program started with a reception in the Hofburg Palace hosted by the **Austrian President, Dr Alexander Van der Bellen**. He and his wife mingled warmly with the group. He opened his formal welcoming speech by speaking very emotionally about **October 7th** and the

hostages who he described as being kept by Hamas under inhumane conditions as human bargaining chips. He spoke most eloquently about the scourge of antisemitism saying "We must not remain silent about anti-Semitism. NEVER AGAIN is today!" He made a point of saying that our visit was very important to him and that it was a sign that Austria will not forget the darkest chapter in its history. He acknowledged that it wasn't until the 1980s that Austria accepted that they were perpetrators rather than the first victims of the Nazis. He ended his address with the words, and they sounded sincere, "I want to underline my deep conviction that you are part of Austria."

I was honoured to have been invited to make some closing remarks and to tell a little of my family's Holocaust story. I could not resist making it plain that I was finding it difficult to come to terms with being in Vienna.

Later that day there was another reception, this time at the Rathaus, the Vienna City Hall, where we heard similar sentiments from **Ms Veronica Kaup-Hasler, the Vienna City Councillor for Culture & Science**.

The rest of the week was taken up with bus tours, walking tours, visits to museums and Holocaust memorials and, even more chillingly to Holocaust-related railway stations. At the site of the former **Aspang Station** we saw a memorial to the over 40,000 Jews who had begun their fateful journeys there. At the **West Bahnhof**, the departure point of the **Kindertransport**, we were all very moved by the prominent bronze sculpture of a boy sitting on his suitcase. Quite a few members of our group, including me, have connections to people saved by Kindertransport.



Shoah Wall of Names, Vienna, Austria.



Kindertransport statue, Vienna, Austria.

Also profoundly moving was the recently built **Shoah Wall of Names** which consists of 200m of concrete wall inscribed with the names of over 65,000 Viennese Jewish victims. These walls, in a public park, surround a large elliptical space. An inscription at the entrance to this memorial makes it clear that countless Austrians were implicated in 'murder'. In common with the rest of our group, I was moved to see names of my relatives and relatives of friends.

Our visit to the **Museum of Vienna** was another

eyeopener. Rather than looking at the Hapsburgs, emperors and royalty, this museum focuses on the city itself and the common people. We learned that, for many years, there had been no displays whatsoever about events in the Hitler years. It was as though the war, and the Holocaust had never happened. But that has all changed. The museum now has large displays dedicated to the war and the Holocaust making it plain that Austrians were perpetrators.

It also documents the frequent demonstrations against **Kurt Waldheim** and his fall from grace and describes how Nazi influence remained significant for many years after the war. Kurt Waldheim, president from 1986 to 1992, had vigorously denied that he had been a member of the Nazi Party. The museum displays a larger than life-size wooden Trojan horse that had been used in anti-Waldheim demonstrations after he had been caught out suggesting that he had been able to serve in the elite WWII cavalry as a non-Nazi because his horse was a party member.

The JWS also organised a visit to the **Vienna Central Cemetery** for those who wanted to seek out family graves. I was delighted to see my paternal grandfather's grave for the first time. We had decided to add my grandmother's name to his headstone, showing that she had perished in **Theresienstadt**. JWS helpfully arranged a meeting with a stonemason who could do this. JWS also facilitated access to Jewish Community archivists who we were able to delve more deeply into our family stories. I learned that my great-grandmother had been widowed in Karlsbad and had moved to Vienna with her seven fairly young children circa 1900. Not only had she made this very courageous move, but she had

then set up a knitting mill on Neubaugasse. This business was later taken over by three of her daughters who, most unconventionally for the time, were also successful businesswomen. I had known that my mother had been apprenticed in this business and that this had ultimately provided my parents with an escape from the Nazis, because, on the strength of her skills, she was able to find work in Strasbourg enabling them to flee Austria in mid-1938.

Our program finished with a Shabbat service at the **Stadt Temple**, the only Viennese synagogue that survived the Holocaust. It escaped being burnt down because it was attached to other buildings which would have also caught fire. Our visit was especially meaningful to me because I had learned from the archivist that this is where my parents were married.

The JWS also arranged for me to visit a large Catholic school to tell the story of my family's Holocaust experience which is something I do in Melbourne as a volunteer with **Courage to Care**. I spoke to a very receptive group of some 70 15-year-olds who asked thoughtful questions and showed that they had significant knowledge of the Holocaust. Afterwards, many students stayed back and were very keen to chat with me and with members of my family.



Anti-Waldheim Trojan Horse, Vienna, Austria.

Much to my amazement, a crew from Austrian National Television filmed the event, interviewed me afterwards (and some of the children too), and the next day screened a very well put together three-minute summary of my story and visit to the school. I figured that it might have been newsworthy because Vienna probably does not have many real live Holocaust survivors available to tell their stories to schools.

A by-product of this was an approach by the Editor of **News Magazin** which I was told is the largest circulation

weekly print and online magazine in Austria. I agreed to an interview and as a result a three-page story appeared detailing my family's Holocaust story. One of the really nice things for me is that they published a photograph of my mother wearing ski-gear taken, I believe, after she had won the 1935 slalom ski championship of Austria. I could only imagine how delighted my mother would have been at this turn of events. When I thanked her for the article, she wrote "It is so important to tell these stories." In this action-packed week, we also managed to spend time with some Viennese friends of our daughter's family, the parents and grandparents of an exchange student who had lived with them in Melbourne in 2020. They invited us on three occasions, including to a lunch at the grandparents' home. They are exactly the same age as us, born during the war, and it was an emotional experience to share our families' wartime stories of loss and trauma in a free and frank exchange. And if all that wasn't enough, my attempt to organise a "stone of remembrance" in memory of my maternal grandmother led to me discovering that it was already in place outside her apartment. These "stones" are small brass plaques, usually organised by descendants, on the footpath outside the apartment block from which Jews were deported. I had the great pleasure of meeting and

thanking the non-Jewish Viennese gentleman who had sponsored "stones of remembrance" for all the Jews who had been deported from his street. We spent two emotive hours together in a typical Viennese café. He had decided it was the right thing to do after elderly women neighbours told him about witnessing the deportations. He was especially motivated because there is a student hostel in the street opposite his apartment where children from all over Austria stay when visiting the capital. He thought they should see the stones right there. All in all, our visit to Vienna was a wonderful opportunity for sharing stories and ultimately for providing some healing although one can never forgive or forget. As I understand it, this JWS program is run twice a year. Anyone descended from Viennese Jews who were affected by the Holocaust should be eligible to attend. I registered in 2019, after an English cousin had attended but it took until 2025 before I made it up the waiting list. JWS is run most efficiently, helpfully and thoughtfully by their **Secretary General, Mag.a Susanne Trauneck**. I strongly recommend that anyone eligible should contact the JWS to register their interest at www.jewish-welcome.at/en/.

Dr George Deutsch OAM

"A Life Well Spent!" - Claude Sanicki

Prior to turn of the century, so long ago I was employed by the International Diabetes institute as its Community Relations/Fund Raising Manager, a major component was of course to raise funds under Professor Paul Zimmet AM to understand the cause of adult-onset diabetes which has become a scourge as we are all living longer but not necessarily healthier.

There is not much fun in fundraising..., hard repetitive and very competitive. Is there such a thing as a bad charity?

After my time at the Diabetes, I spent 10 years volunteering as a guide and fundraiser at our beloved Shrine of Remembrance, a very different organization. One conservative and one open to all ideas within reason. Yes, one can ask for money, from government, philanthropic organizations, raffles, Theatre nights, bequests etc. Horses for courses!

Arranging for Dinner Dance/auctions and beyond was easy. Ideal venue. prestigious committee room at Caulfield racecourse. Done! Dinner and drinks, not cheap. But the key is now to find items that will entice people to put their hands deeper into their own pockets and enjoy doing so; much to gain but little pain and time to be endured.

A Ron Barassi signed football-easy! Carlton and St Kilda signed football jumpers relatively easy. Jockey silks signed, easy! Tickets Hoyts Cinemas, Spa treatments, tickets to Bali (had to be bought) little profit, not easy. Sitting around the committee meeting table the ladies said, "Everything is geared to men, so let's try and appeal to men and sport!" so we came upon a different concept.

Let's send these identities a copy of the Diabetes Annual Report and where funds are being directed to - research and treatment of Diabetes.

Let's ask the VIPs for a cheque for a dollar or no dollars but cheques to be signed by them together with photos. Overwhelming positive response! Too easy! John Newcombe, Rod Marsh, Margaret Smith, Sir Donald



Claude with signed photographs of former Prime Minister, John Howard and former leader of the Australian Labor Party, Kim Beazley.



A display of notes that were signed by Ronnie Biggs.

little note includes a prayer message for success. Madam Secretary Madeline Albright. Officially prohibited by Secretary a

Act? Little notes but no cheques but notes framed and sold. So easy, one could make a career from this work Ha!

Now we come to controversy. At the turn of century three names kept appearing in the press. For various reasons and not all for holy reasons.

The first name: OJ Simpson... convicted killing his girlfriend in USA. Second name Christopher Skase: Tax matters then living in Majorca. Third name Ronnie Biggs: Fugitive suspected of the "Great Train Robbery" living in Brazil.



Claude with Ronnie Biggs.

Managed to obtain correct addresses. Sent them Diabetes annual reports and reasons for unusual requests, even included return stamped envelopes. In fact, one major supporter of the Diabetes Institute

said they "Would donate \$5,000 if we could get a cheque from Mr. Skase for even 1 Lire or 1 Franc or 1 Drachma, one of anything! Unfortunately, this was not to be! But a huge surprise awaited! A few weeks later a return letter arrives with a cheque. Yes, a cheque from Mr. Biggs and to add to the spice a cheeky return address. Who remembers Richard Kimble TV series? The Fugitive. Dear Mr. Biggs. (Call me Ronnie please). You may recall the cheques that you so kindly sent us? Actually raised \$4,000 at a charity auction for the Diabetes Institute. Mr. Biggs wrote: "By any chance now I have my fingers

Bradman, Roy Higgins etc. \$300, \$500, \$1000. The more the uniqueness, the more the value.

Let's go politics! John Howard, Kim Beazley, Jeff Kennett, Tim Fischer, Louise Asher etc.

We are on a roll. Let's go high! Prince Charles: does not have a cheque book, Pope Pius, sent a

crossed (May I call you Claude?) you may know that I am a 'non-person' here in Brazil. Somehow, I was provided a cheque book, no money in the account and that cheque you received from me was the last one in the book. Wonder what I did with the rest. Haha?"

"Claude, I have a suggestion for you. Go to a stamp or coin shop and buy a few old English pound notes and send them to me and I will be happy to sign the notes and return them to you".

"And possibly you may wish to include a few \$US notes as well".

Of course, I did as Ronnie asked and sent him, from memory \$US200. About this time. I was diagnosed with bowel cancer. My marriage had broken down earlier in the year. Truth was I was feeling really low because I was in the middle of chemo and radio therapy sessions at that time.

I decided to visit my only sister in Miami, USA to talk of the future or no future.

Usual way to fly to Miami is Melbourne to Los Angeles then on to Miami. The powers that be suggested "Claude go visit your mate on the way to Miami and get him to sign some more notes. We will pay for that sector! "What are you talking about? He is a crook and a fugitive from justice!"

Anyhow I did as ask and spent a week with Ronnie Biggs. He was kind, gentle, fun to be with. Many English tourists sought him out daily by phone fax and appeared at his front door. Yes, a celebrity. Yes, a fugitive. Yes, but to me personally an honorable, knowledgeable man of the world including understanding the Jewish scene in London and an actor.

Ronnie suggested "Maybe on my return home could I visit his ex-wife Charmaine and take her out for lunch?" Yes, I did so quite a few times. Ronnie sent me Christmas cards after he returned to England (He had a stroke and could not be treated in Brazil, he was still a non-citizen)

I can conclude that by use of his name \$100,000s of thousands of dollars have raised for charity and this continues to this day. But for many, now including the younger generations - it's Ronnie who?



Claude with Ronnie Biggs.

Claude Sanicki

Lucky Escape 1942 - Ruth Scheuer OAM

Wygoda is an outer suburb of Warsaw Praga Goclawek Wygoda.

At the closing of the Drzewica ghetto, an announcement was made" All must gather at the Rynek Market Place, bringing only the smallest amount of essentials.

Thus, my mother dressed us in three layers of clothing, each wearing a small bag of gold rings and coins, around our necks.

The ghetto is surrounded by burning fire!

My wonderful father Josef Wald, short, clever businessman he managed to marry the prettiest most educated girl, Genia Boskes.

My father chatted up and bribed the guards so the three of us, Mumma, Celina and I could escape.

Constantly moving to safety with Mamma's clever guidance.

Wondering? How a community of this little ghetto of wise men, scholars and rabbis were so ignorant?

Yet this Polish fireman who knocked on our door that night... KNEW!

He said" No! you cannot follow this group on horse drawn



Ruth Scheuer OAM with her daughter Helen.

carriages!"

"Don't you know where they are going?"

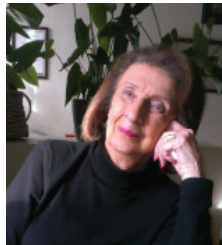
"They are going to Auschwitz to be burned alive!"

Motto:

Be inquisitive! Ask questions, don't follow!

Ruth Scheuer OAM

In Memorium - Anne Korman



It is with sadness that we announce the passing away of the late **Anne (nee Springer) Korman**.

Anne and her family escaped Vienna in 1938, after experiencing the **Anschluss**.

They travelled to London and after a

few weeks boarded the ship the **Strathaird** to Australia.

After **Kristallnacht** took place, Anne's parents managed to secure permission for the majority of her extended family to immigrate to Australia.

She married the late Jack Korman and had three children, six grandchildren and twelve great grandchildren.

WISHING ALL CHILD SURVIVORS AND THEIR FAMILIES A CHAG SAMEACH

