



Levine-Sklut Judaic Library and Resource Center



BESA: A Code of Honor

At the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library in Conjunction with Violins of Hope

The Levine-Sklut Judaic Library will be hosting a reception for the opening of the Yad Vashem exhibit BESA: A Code of Honor - Muslim Albanians Who Rescued Jews During the Holocaust. The event will be held on Wednesday, March 14 at 7 PM in the Library.



Some of the photos from Norman Gershman's collection that will be on exhibit starting March 14 at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library and Resource Center.

The photographic exhibit, which will be located in the Speizman Gallery - adjacent to the Library - offers a glimpse into the lives of a people whose commitment to their faith requires them to act unselfishly even under the most dire circumstances.

Albania, the only European country with a Muslim majority, succeeded in the place where other European nations failed. Almost all Jews living within Albanian borders during the German occupation, those of Albanian origin and refugees alike, were saved.

Besa is an Albanian interpretation of the Koran, and is generally translated as "faith" or sometimes "to keep the promise." It is so

deeply ingrained in the Muslim Albanian culture that failure to act honorably toward others is a source of shame and disgrace. Albania is perhaps the only nation where religious prejudice does not exist and where compassion toward others is the nation's highest ethical code.

Besa also means taking care of those in need and being hospitable. During World War II, Albanians, 70% of whom are Muslim, saved over 2,000 Jews from Nazi persecution. Some were hidden in caves, in woods, or in bunkers, but many—particularly the children—were able to live in homes as family. Whatever the cir-

cumstance, Albanians provided them with food, shelter, and clothing; more important, they provided safety and a great sense of belonging.

The exhibit is based on the work of American photographer Norman H. Gershman and his quest to tell the remarkable history of the Albanians who saved Jews during the Holocaust. Over a five-year period he sought out, photographed, and collected dozens of powerful and moving stories of heroism. His work, in photographs and text, reveals the extraordinary choices of ordinary people acting within their true Muslim faith.

In story after story, they speak the same truth. Their faith, and the compassion it instilled, left no room for doubt. They must, no matter what the peril and what the cost, do the right thing.

The exhibit will be on display March 14-May 15 and is free and open to the public. ☆

Award Winning Author Edith Pearlman Visits Charlotte

Edith Pearlman has published more than 250 works of short fiction and short non-fiction in national magazines, literary journals, anthologies, and on-line pub-

lications.

Her first collection of stories, *Vaquita*, won the Drue Heinz Prize for Literature and was published by the University of Pittsburgh University Press in 1996. Her second, *Love Among The Greats*, won the Spokane Annual Fiction Prize. Her third collection, *How to Fall*, was published by Sarabande Press in 2005 and won the Mary McCarthy Prize in Short Fiction. Her fourth collection, *Binocular Vision: New and Selected Stories*, was published in January 2011.

"Pearlman's prose is smooth and poetic, and her world seems safe and engaging. So it's arresting when, suddenly, almost imperceptibly, she slips emotion into the narrative, coloring it unexpectedly with deep or delicate hues." — Roxana Robinson, *The New York Times*

Her current book, *Binocular*



Edith Pearlman

Vision, is the first book to be nominated for the National Book Award, the Story Prize, and the National Book Critics Circle Award in the same year.

Join us for a reading, question and answer session, book signing, and dessert reception at the Levine-Sklut Judaic Library on Wednesday, April 18 at 7 PM. Free. ☆

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Photos [L to R]: Stacy Marx, the original Mitey Rider, with Harry Swimmer | Swimmer Insurance Today

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The Levine-Sklut Judaic Library and Resource Center gratefully acknowledges the following donations to the library:

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Author - \$100 to \$249
Douglas and Kelly Wilson
Poet - \$50 to \$99
Stuart and Carolyn Hennes
David Jacobson
Reader - up to \$49
David and Janet Lefkowitz

To the Jewish Historical Society of Greater Charlotte:
Sandra Goldman, in honor of Janice Zacks

To the Florence Melton Adult Mini-School
The Friday Morning Melton class, in honor of Thelma Wand's birthday
Burt and Donna Greenspon, in honor of Rabbi Yossi and Mariashi Groner

To the General Fund
Michael and Robbie McGinley, in memory of Riselle Lerner, mother of Lisa Nagel