

Community News

Proof Evil Can Be Defeated (Part 1)

By Suly Chenkin

When any of the thousands of students who have attended a Butterfly Project Workshop during the past three years is asked what his or her favorite part of the Workshop is, the most common

answer is "listening to a Holocaust survivor speak." The Levine JCC's Butterfly Project is fortunate and most grateful to have two wonderful survivors, Irving Bienstock and Suly Chenkin, participate in its workshops and tell their



Suly Chenkin

stories to those students. The following is the first half of Mrs. Chenkin's story, recently published in the Charlotte Observer. (Stay tuned for the rest of the story in next month's issue of the Charlotte Jewish News)

My story begins and ends with a prophecy uttered by my grandmother at the moment I was born. "This child" she said, "because she was born on the first day of the Jewish New Year, will be lucky her entire life." Six months later the Nazis invaded Lithuania and the word "luck" disappeared for all of us Jewish people living in that country.

By the time I was eight months old, we wore a yellow Star of David and at 10 months we were prisoners in the hard labor/concentration camp known as the Kovno Ghetto. At the age of one, I survived the selection in which one-third of the population, mostly children and the elderly, were taken away and shot.

In the two years that followed, disease, famine, hard labor, lack of firewood, and the constant terror of not knowing what was

going to happen next decimated another one-third of the population. Then came the "Kinder Akztzie," the raid where the SS went house by house, pulling out all children under the age of 12, and any adult deemed unfit for labor.

Because of my father's boss, a Nazi with a conscience, we were forewarned, hurriedly built a hiding place and stayed hidden in the newly excavated bunker.

On the second day of the raid, they came to our house. I remember my terror in the darkness of the hole, as my mother's hand kept pressing against my mouth so that I wouldn't cry and give us away. Luckily, the Nazis and their dogs did not sniff out our hiding place, but from then on, I had to remain inside the house, for there were no children visibly left in the ghetto.

With each passing day my parents grew more desperate and as the chances of their own survival became nil, they made a decision no parent should ever have to make: They gave me away.

On May 11, 1944, my parents told me they loved me, that if they could they would come back for me, but that I could never ask for them, for if I did, the bad guys would kill them and me. I was given a sleeping potion and when it took effect I was put into a potato sack.

Outside a cart awaited. My sack was loaded atop of the other sacks and the cart travelled alongside the ghetto fence. At a pre-arranged time and place, I was thrown over the barbed wire. Two women, who had been waiting ran to the fence, tore open the sack,



pulled me out of it and placed me in a baby carriage. I remained asleep as they wheeled me away to what everyone hoped was a chance to live.

I was 3-1/2 years old.

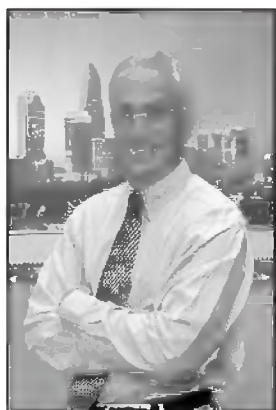
My fate had been entrusted to someone my parents had never met. Miriam Shulman was Jewish herself, from a prestigious rabbinical family. She had gone undercover, placing her own and other people's children with the few Lithuanians who were willing to take us in.

My parents had sent me out in the nick of time. Within eight weeks, the fewer than 6,000 remaining inmates of the ghetto were marched through the city to the train depot. There they were loaded onto the cattle cars and sent to concentration camps: the men to Dachau in Germany, the women to Stuthoff in Poland.

A few months later the Soviet Army liberated Kovno and we came out of hiding. But the ghetto had been liquidated, dynamited and burned to the ground and the people, including my parents, were gone and presumed dead. To be continued.

For more information about, to schedule participation in, or to volunteer at a Butterfly Project workshop, please contact Dana Kapustin, Butterfly Project Coordinator at butterflyproject@charlotte.or or 704-944-6833. ☆

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Heather Fisher Joins LJCC as Head Swim Coach

Heather brings over 20 years of experience working with young children and their families throughout our community in both



Heather Fisher

educational and coaching roles. She is originally from Sanibel Island, FL and started competitive swimming at the age of 4. Heather continued her swimming career as a top state ranked High School athlete in Florida and went on to a UNC-Wilmington swimming scholarship. She earned a BA in Psychology and has also completed all of her coursework for her MA in Early Childhood Special Education. In recent years, Heather has coached and mentored hundreds of children and adults throughout the Charlotte area working with several organi-



zations including Tri It For Life, Queen City Kids Triathlon Club and most recently, the Masters Swim Coach at the YMCA. Heather is an avid athlete and has competed in over 50 triathlons since 2007. She enjoys spending time with her husband and her four teenage children. Heather joins us with a tremendous passion for swimming along with demonstrated accomplishments, skill sets and expertise. ☆

CJP's Circle of Life

(Continued from page 10)

As Ron and I look back at our good fortune in building our lives in Charlotte and the role the Charlotte Jewish community has played in our family's development, we want to make a contribution beyond annual giving to help ensure the foundation of Judaism for future generations of children in our community. While we can provide only a modest gift for that future growth, we know that others in the Charlotte Jewish community who have benefitted directly and indirectly from its institutions have done likewise and

as our community joins together, we feel great joy in knowing that the CJP will be there for generations to come and share in its warm, loving, caring Jewish environment that creates future leaders of our community.

Come and build your community like the Weiner Family has enjoyed. We are happy to give you a tour at your convenience. For more information or to schedule a tour, please contact Alyson Kalik at akalik@shalomcharlotte.org or 704-944-6776. We look forward to meeting you. ☆

Your next journey begins here...

JOIN US AT OUR ANNUAL TRAVEL & CRUISE SHOW

NEW DATE!

Saturday, February 1, 2014 • 11am-4pm

Charlotte Convention Center

www.MannTravels.com for more info

