

# A Daughter's Journey to Reclaim the Past

What if you never knew your grandparents, cousins, aunts and uncles? What if you knew you were Jewish but you never talked about religion?

This is how Fern Schumer Chapman lived her childhood, empty and unfulfilled. During the recent Spring Lecture, sponsored by the Women's Division of the Jewish Federation, women in our community got to meet the author of *Motherland*. Fern Schumer Chapman and hear her compelling story of a mother/daughter journey to reclaim the past.

"It's a great story and it's a



Allison Lerner, Roberta Rogers and Stefanie Reiner.

II, while her mother escaped. Fern felt disconnected from her mother, because to her, if a mother didn't have a sense of history, her child wouldn't really know who she was.

When Fern was pregnant with her third child, her mother approached her with the offer of returning to her hometown in Germany. The trip turned out to be the key to repairing their relationship, and for Fern to discover who



Bobbi Bernstein and Mary Wojnowich.



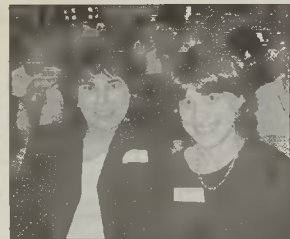
Julie Levine, Cheryl Alley and Lynn Edelstein.



Event co-chairs Ellen Engelhardt and Cheryl Alley.

compelling story, but it offered many more gifts — it brought me a sense of who my mother was..." says Fern Schumer Chapman.

Fern Chapman was a journalist,



Author Fern Schumer Chapman with co-chair Cheryl Alley.

making her living by getting the answers, but her mother's story remained a mystery. Her mother was so pained by her early life in Germany that she avoided talking about it. All Fern knew was that her grandparents had been killed in concentration camps in World War



Linda Seigel, Donna Foster, Lenora Stein and Donna's parents.

her mother was. Her mother began to open up — she told Fern the painful story of the day her parents sent her away, and how they stood on the dock, growing smaller as her ship sailed away.

For Fern's mother, one of the great gifts of the trip was that she no longer needed to hide the stories she felt were too painful to discuss. Fern felt that a lot of the hurt and anger between them evaporated because of this trip. Now that she has a sense of her mother's history, Fern no longer feels like her mother is a stranger — now she's a hero.

If you missed the lecture, you can read more about Fern in her book, *Motherland: Beyond the Holocaust: A Daughter's Journey to Reclaim the Past*. ☆

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For more information, please call Marnie Moskowitz in the Federation office at 704-944-6764.

