

Memorial Building Is in Sight, But the Community's Help Is Needed

By Brian Yesowitch, Hebrew Cemetery Association Board President

As the autumn approaches in Charlotte, the outdoor swimming pools close, children settle into their school routines, and the leaves change their colors. Nowhere is nature's beauty more evident than on the beautiful grounds that make up our Hebrew Cemetery. Founded in 1867, the Cemetery's landscaping has mature trees planted by generations of Charlotte's Jewish citizens so that today we may enjoy their beauty in every season.

We are all familiar with the Talmudic story about the old man and the carob tree. An old man was planting a tree. A young person passed by and asked, "What are you planting?" "A carob tree," the old man replied. "Silly fool," said the youth. "Don't you know that it takes 70 years for a carob tree to bear fruit?" "That's okay," said the old man. "Just as others planted for me, I plant for future generations."

In the same spirit, I am asking you now to consider participating in our Hebrew Cemetery Capital Campaign by pledging \$200 a year for five years. To contribute to the care of our cemetery is a great mitzvah. Your participation is a wonderful thing to do for your community today and for the generations of Jewish Charlotteans to come. You do not have to be a cemetery member to participate in the campaign. Furthermore, every individual or family that pledges \$1,000 (payable over five years)



The nearly-completed cemetery memorial building.

to our Hebrew Cemetery Capital Campaign may place the name of a loved one or family, and be recognized as the donor, on the cemetery's Memorial Wall. This wall is located prominently in the Mindy Ellen Levine Chapel.

As evidenced by the tremendous attendance at our recent Annual Memorial Service and by the many personal conversations I have had with community members, I know that the community shares great excitement about the completion of the Hebrew Cemetery Memorial Building. The Memorial Building will provide tangible benefits for our Charlotte Jewish community.

Not only will we have air-conditioned and heated space for families to hold funerals and unveilings, but also the restrooms and private family space in the Berlin Family Room will improve

the funeral experience for families in their time of grief. The Gorelick Gathering Room will create space for volunteer and community groups to visit and learn more about our cemetery and to participate in grief counseling workshops. Our Expansion Plan will double the number of plots, and provides for extensive landscaping improvements, including the Silverman Fountain and the Blumenthal Garden.

Many of you already know the centerpiece of our Chapel is the Holy Ark that stood for many years in Temple Beth El. During our Annual Memorial Service, the 300 service attendees had an opportunity to view the Holy Ark in its new home. Comments that day ranged from "breathtaking" to "perfect."

We in the community are keenly aware of the gift Jewish

Charlotte families left for us in 1867. Although there were only about a dozen families, they purchased enough land to accommodate funerals for Jewish Charlotteans for more than 150 years. In 2013, we have the opportunity to add twice the number of burial plots and to build a multi-purpose facility on Cemetery property that will serve many religious, cultural, and educational functions for the next 150 years.

As a Jewish community, we are called to honor the past, celebrate the present and embrace the future. The Hebrew Cemetery needs your help to complete the building, the landscaping and the overall expansion. Whatever your reason for pride in our Cemetery's expansion, I hope you will participate in our current capital campaign to completely fund the completion of these projects. Gifts of \$1,000 or more, payable over five years, will allow those donors to have named plaques on our Memorial Wall, but gifts of any amount are welcome.

I hope you will join the over one hundred individuals and foundations that have given to our campaign. To those of you who have given, our community and our Cemetery Association Board is most grateful. For those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to contribute, I encourage you to contact Sandra Goldman at 704-576-1859 or director@hebrewcemetery.org. I, too, welcome your comments and questions. You may email me at byshalomch@gmail.com. ☆



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NC Holocaust Commission Luncheon Honors Survivors and Liberators

By Lori Katzenstein

At first look it seems like a family reunion, a group of people bound by a past, happy to be together. Then the mood changes, as each individual relives a piece of his or her youth pain washes over

their faces. Here among friends they dare to step back in time and share their journeys to survival. Many of these elderly are the children of the Holocaust.

"It seems the less time you have the more you talk." Suly Chenkin was six months old when she was separated from her family. Today she shared the experiences of her childhood in Lithuania during a brunch sponsored by the North Carolina Council on the Holocaust at the Jewish Community Center in Charlotte. Chenkin was miraculously reunited with her family at age 6.

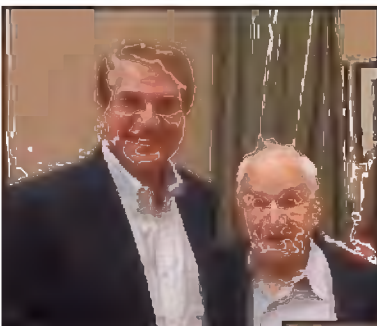
Manfred Katz was not as fortunate. Liberated at age 17 from the Kaiserwald concentration camp, Katz learned that his parents and younger sister did not survive. Katz only opened up about his experience after his children were grown, "They needed to know and that's why I started talking."

Now at 85, Katz speaks to students and teachers around the State promoting tolerance and acceptance. Also woven into the group were WWII soldiers. Jesse Oxendine was 18 when he liberated a camp near Berlin. "I couldn't conceive of it if I had not seen it." Oxendine, now 87, says he thinks about the horrors of that

camp everyday.

Charlotteans Mitch Rifkin and Judi Strause volunteer with the Holocaust Council. They bring survivors together for various events like this brunch.

Their goal is to honor those who survived and allow them to share their experiences so the millions who did not survive the Holocaust will never be forgotten. Rifkin says he is always humbled and thankful for the testimonies presented by survivors and liberators. "Being around them, listening to them share their experiences, it makes me always strive to be a better person." ☆



Photos from luncheon taken by Talli Dippold



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