

Reaching the Highest Level

COOPERCOMMUNICATIONS

Early Holocaust Education Pioneers in San Francisco

[Commissioned by Jewish Family and Children's Services
of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and Sonoma Counties]

The year was 1977, and it was a Thursday, the day before Passover Eve in the Sunset district of San Francisco, where many of the survivors of the Holocaust had settled after the war. Tauba Weiss, mother of three young men, and a Holocaust survivor herself, was finishing her Passover shopping when she spotted a swastika emblazoned across a storefront window at 46th Ave. and Taraval St.

Enraged, she confronted the manager within—Allen Vincent. Unbeknownst to the landlord of the building, Nathan Green, who lived upstairs, Vincent was the leader of the National Socialist White Workers Party in San Francisco. He had been holding party meetings and dinners at the store since its opening only three days earlier. These meetings and his refusal to wait on blacks were in violation of the Unruh Civil Rights Act. He had also misrepresented himself to the landlord as a bookstore manager. Little had Green, a Holocaust survivor, known that the “bookstore” would carry the writings of Hitler and his closest aide, Rudolf Hess.

Tauba Weiss raced home and telephoned everyone she knew, including her husband—himself a Holocaust survivor—neighbors, and community leaders.

The next evening, Friday, April 1, a crowd of 50 gathered at the bookstore, led by Morris Weiss and his 24-year-old son, Allen. Several had brought axes and sledgehammers, but Allen was the only one positively identified as a ringleader of the vandalism when the police arrived. He had attacked the plate glass with his bare fists.

Arrested for malicious mischief, he was placed in the back seat of the police cruiser—the same car where police had placed Vincent in the front seat to protect him from the crowd. When Tauba saw her son in the same vehicle with a Nazi, she screamed to her husband, who approached the car, pulled the front door open, and started attacking Vincent. Morris would be arrested for aggravated assault and resisting arrest.

Word traveled fast, and soon there was a concerted effort to hold a rally in San Francisco in support of the Weiss family. But the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) stepped in immediately with legal counsel. The Weiss men were free to go home that same evening.

Still, the vigilante action continued late into the night of April 1. The crowd only grew, and before the morning came, the bookstore had been set on fire and the synagogue across the street, B'nai Emunah, attacked with rocks and baseball bats. During the next day's Passover services, the stained glass windows showed the pock marks.

San Francisco Supervisor Dianne Feinstein visited the Weisses and asked that they call off the rally, which would be divisive and could lead to more violence. Yet, what to do? She promised the Weisses that she would personally sponsor a

resolution to prevent such provocations in future. The Board of Supervisors had attempted to pass a resolution banning the wearing of the Nazi storm trooper uniform in public three years earlier. This time the resolution succeeded.

Tauba Weiss survived six years in Auschwitz, but her mother, brothers, and sisters (all but one of her nine siblings, a brother) were killed. "I can never forget what I saw," she says. "Sometimes I wonder, Why did I survive? I am here to tell you that this happened, and I need to tell the world it will never happen again."

Her husband, Morris, was a cousin and had survived nine forced labor camps and Auschwitz as well as a death march before liberation. His entire family was exterminated by the Nazis. In 1980 he returned to Germany to testify in a war crimes trial, and in 1984 he was buried the day before the groundbreaking for the Holocaust Memorial in San Francisco. His wife read the speech he had planned to give.

The resolution, signed May 20, 1977:

Resolved that this Board of Supervisors does hereby urge the California State Legislature to enact legislation similar to all of the provisions of Section 238-c of the Military Law of the State of New York, as enacted in 1967, ... which controls and prohibits the wearing of Nazi uniforms in public.

But a much larger response was necessary. The Holocaust survivors, who had been a quiet group until now, had seen something that they could not tolerate. “Not here. Not in America,” as they insisted at a meeting called by the JCRC.

Earl Raab—the Executive Director of the JCRC—had originally come to San Francisco to write an article about the “strange” Jewish community here for *Commentary* magazine. “It was strange,” he says, “because the headquarters of the Council for Judaism, which was an anti-Israel Jewish group, was here. ...

“Nobody was talking about the Holocaust at first, even in Israel. For the survivors, it was a painful thing, and people had to learn how to handle it. They had to find a new identity and survive with that experience behind them. The JCRC didn’t go out looking for survivors, and they didn’t come to talk to the organized Jewish community. But it finally poured out of them. It was a strange, historical kind of convergence of things that helped. The Nazi bookstore helped break it out, and Morris Weiss certainly did. ...

“When Morris did what he did, we were electrified. We asked the police to set up patrols in the Jewish neighborhoods during Passover Week. A group of police officers went to Vincent and told him to get out of town. He had a record, and they threatened to pursue it.”

Then Raab asked Naomi Lauter, who had just accepted a staff position at the JCRC, to pull the survivors together and develop a Committee of Remembrance. An organizing meeting was held at the Bureau of Jewish Education (14th Ave. and Balboa St.) on June 13, 1977.

JCRC board chair Matthew Weinberg asked Rabbi William Dalin to be the chair of the Committee of Remembrance and of its Yom HaShoah Program Committee. Both committees united the San Francisco community around a single cause: to ensure the remembrance and lessons of the Holocaust for future generations. Rabbi Dalin was chosen because of his background in the Displaced Persons camps established at the end of World War II. When he stepped down after three years, in 1981, Erna Sparer and William Lowenberg became co-chairs.

John Rothmann, who was named secretary of the Committee of Remembrance, remembers that the leadership of the JCRC was seated like a panel at the front a room at the Jewish Bureau at the first meeting. “The attitude of the organized community was somewhat detached,” he says. “Their approach was, ‘we have an orderly process in this city,’ ... but the survivors were going to have their say at last. One survivor, Andrew Stern, couldn’t take it. He came running down the aisle and slammed his fist on the table, saying, ‘You don’t understand. We can’t let it happen again. Not here.’

“It was then that the organized community understood we couldn’t just talk. We had to do something.”

Naomi Lauter also remembers the first meeting well: “The survivors started yelling at us: ‘Where have you been? We’ve been here 30 years, and no one has come near us.’ The conversation was rough, but it was real.” Rothmann explains what had happened in the interim, in all of those years: “They had spent the decades since the war rebuilding—starting businesses and families. They were new—known as the greeners. By the time of the Nazi bookstore incident, they were established and able to give articulation to their feelings.”

When Earl Raab asked the survivors what they wanted, they said, “We want a Holocaust memorial, a Yom HaShoah meeting at [Temple] Emanu-El, and a Holocaust library and research center.”

In retrospect, these requests seem prescient. The Eichmann trial in the late 1960s had brought the Holocaust into focus for the world. And San Francisco would be one of the first cities in the United States to offer significant remembrances and educational programs.

The city had attracted German Jews since its founding in 1850. Mainly merchants, they had become community and business leaders. When Prussian Polish Jews—primarily artisans—arrived 20 years after the German Jews, a schism developed. Two synagogues were built: one for the German Jews and one for the Eastern European Jews: Emanu-El and Sherith Israel, respectively.

During and after World War II, San Francisco was one of the major cities to attract refugees and Holocaust survivors. The earlier division caused by economic and educational differences persisted—until what would come to be known as “the Nazi bookstore incident.”

Earl Raab named San Francisco architect and Holocaust survivor Max R. Garcia as chairman of the committee to establish a Holocaust library and research center. His co-chair was Lonny Darwin, who was a Hungarian-German refugee from the war.

At this time George Moscone was the mayor of San Francisco, and he established a Mayor’s Committee for a Memorial to the Six Million Victims of the Holocaust. Public land would have to be given for the project, and funding would have to be

raised from private sources. When Moscone was assassinated, Supervisor Dianne Feinstein became mayor and continued to sponsor the committee's work.

The Mayor's Committee was not only concerned that there be a memorial to Holocaust victims in San Francisco; it wanted to ensure that continued education would follow. Besides the mayor, several prominent non-Jewish leaders in the city joined the committee: the supervisors, Protestant and Catholic clergy, including the Rev. Norman Leach, Acting Director of the San Francisco Council of Churches; the Rev. Jim Jones of People's Temple; Jack Ahern, Director of the Commission on Social Justice of the Catholic Archdiocese; the Rev. John Streeter of First Baptist Church; and the Rev. A.C. Ubalde, of Bethany Methodist Church. The committee's chair was Rhoda Goldman, and its honorary co-chairs were Archbishop John R. Quinn, Bishop William Swing, Rabbi Malcolm M. Sparer, and the Rev. William Turner.

The Jewish Community Relations Council had started Holocaust education programs for the public schools before the bookstore incident, but had learned, as its chairman told a *Jewish Bulletin* reporter, "that the schools were increasingly ignoring education about the Nazis, [so] we started a massive program with teachers and students attempting to remedy that situation. We have done this with special support from the Jewish Welfare Federation." The associate director of JCRC at this time, Rita Semel, was deeply involved in this educational program.

As Weinberg stated in an article published in the *Jewish Bulletin* on April 8, 1977, the purpose of the educational effort was "to be sure that every resident of the San Francisco area understands what is behind this past week's headlines: why

Nazism was the ultimate expression of anti-human politics; why it is so hateful to Jews and other Americans who know it; why it must be hateful to everybody, including those who are too young to have been in a war against it.”

The San Francisco Holocaust Memorial: “The Survivor”

Roselyne “Cissie” Swig and Henry Hopkins were cochairs of the design subcommittee of the Mayor’s Committee, and William Lowenberg was chair of the fundraising subcommittee. Rhoda and her husband, Richard Goldman, were leading philanthropists in the city; Cissie Swig had a long-standing interest in art and had been president of the city’s Arts Commission. Henry Hopkins was director of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. And William Lowenberg had been head of the Jewish Federation in San Francisco.

Swig remembers the early discussions: “When the Holocaust memorial was first suggested, I think it was a surprise for the city, and for some people a long time in coming. It was an adventure to see how people felt about expressing their feelings about the Holocaust. Bill Lowenberg was instrumental in sharing his [wartime] experiences and why it was so important for the city to have a remembrance.

“We wanted people to remember it in an honorable, constructive, emotional way—in a way that had integrity to it and would sustain its importance. Bill charged our community with keeping that in mind. He felt it was important for us not to forget and to honor those no longer with us and the families who were left.”

Representing the survivors, Gabriel Piotrkowski told the Mayor's Committee that the memorial would serve two purposes: "Not only will it be a reminder of what happened to 6 million Jews, it will be an inspiration for those of us who survived and for all who believe in democracy to make certain it can never happen again."

Recollections vary about how many internationally known sculptors were asked to submit their ideas and sketches (between 6 and 11), but, in the end, a figurative artist, George Segal, was chosen. Segal was of Russian Polish Jewish origin, and most of his European relatives were killed during the Holocaust. His father was an Orthodox Jewish butcher who immigrated to a chicken farm in New Jersey. Still, when first approached, Segal was reluctant because he wasn't sure he could do justice to the subject. As Swig remembers, "His relationship to the issue was slightly distant. He didn't feel that he had the deep emotion at that time to produce a piece that would be meaningful and memorable. And at the time he was going off to Japan. So we asked him to think about it. He agreed to stop in San Francisco on his way back from Japan, and we would talk about it. And he would decide within himself whether he could produce a piece that would respond to what was being asked and which he could feel good about. ...

"When he decided he wanted to submit something, we were very excited. I don't think any one of us knew we would get a piece that was so powerful and honest and so charged with the subject. And then he took as the figure of 'the Survivor' somebody whom we all knew: his friend Martin Weyl, the first director of the Israel Museum and a Holocaust survivor. That made it even more meaningful."

In 1982 the site chosen by the committee was at the fountain in front of the

Legion of Honor in Lincoln Park. But after more thought by museum staff, they determined that the memorial would be better placed off to the side, overlooking the Pacific. As Claire Isaacs, Director of the San Francisco Arts Commission at the time, described it: "The site is sunken, enclosed by shrubbery, offering a certain amount of seclusion; the work isn't thrust upon you. You'll see the head of the standing figure before you get to the site, but the sprawling figures will be hidden."

Other sites that had been seriously considered were Temple Emanu-El, Golden Gate Park, Stern Grove, Union Square, UN Plaza, Muir Woods, and the garden of the Bureau of Jewish Education.

The fundraising committee hoped to raise \$150,000 and asked 36 people—relating to the legend of the "36 Just Men" who walk the earth—to give \$15,000 each. A dinner was planned to raise smaller amounts, ranging from \$100 to \$5,000. In the end, the sculpture was erected at a cost of \$500,000. The Gerbode Foundation helped finance the gift.

Segal worked on the piece intensely for three months, finally producing a scene of seven men, two women, and a boy, either naked or in undergarments, "tossed in a heap." A lone man—"The Survivor"—stands at a barbed wire fence. Unlike the corpses, he was covered by striped prison pajamas (now missing). The figures were cast in bronze with a white patina.

As Segal described his inspiration: "I must have looked at 1,000 photographs, and I was struck by the obscenity of the disorder, the heaping of the bodies. In most countries, there is a ritual order at funerals. The corpses are carefully

composed, and there is a ritual of grieving. Here was a decision by a modern state to perform official murder of an entire race. The indignity of the heaping, the total disregard for death, spoke of the insanity.”

In an interview at the New York Jewish Museum, where a plaster model of the sculpture was displayed before the bronze piece was shipped to San Francisco, Segal described the effect he wanted his work to have: “The sculpture must speak, I feel very strongly, to generations of young Jews who have to discover what happened. It must speak strongly to generations of young Gentiles. It must speak strongly to anyone with a sense of ethics. If only the Jews survive as ethical or outraged at [the Holocaust], the Jews are still doomed if there’s no ethics left in the Gentile community.”

The sculpture was dedicated on November 7, 1984 and generated a lot of controversy from the start. As Rhoda Goldman commented, “If there’s no controversy, there’s no public opinion. We knew it wouldn’t please everyone. The uproar over the sculpture was not unusual, but in this case, seemed sensational.” She thought the sculpture would attract a lot of attention “because it is by an outstanding artist and it’s unusual as a memorial.”

Dianne Feinstein described the monument as “a signal of the human spirit that the ancestral group which had been slated for extinction persevered and will persevere.”

William Lowenberg commented to reporter Charles Shere of *The Oakland Tribune*: “We bear witness to the Holocaust—and so does this piece of art.”

Lowenberg was born in Germany but raised in Holland during the war. He was sent to Auschwitz when he was 14. He said, "I have an obligation to tell first that it happened; second that a sophisticated, educated, knowledgeable society did it; third that they did it while others were watching. ... We have to keep people alert to the threat. We want to show the world that these are not fables."

Lowenberg had been instrumental in leading a subcommittee at the JCRC called the Holocaust Survivors Committee, which had helped raise funds for the memorial. Holocaust survivors were defined not only as camp survivors but as partisans and those who fought the Nazis and hid from them. The steering committee consisted of prominent survivors Stanley Wachter, Henry Shlamovitz, Morris Weiss, Rachela Gelbart, Gabe Piotrkowski, Gloria Lyon, Henry Kruger, and Charles and Ann Glass.

After it was dedicated, the sculpture, which is not walled off from public access, was vandalized several times. "It was the survivors," remembers John Rothmann, "who tenderly cleaned the graffiti and placed flowers around the sculpture, sweeping away debris and tending to it themselves when there was no budget to maintain it."

Holocaust Library and Research Center

Before he was asked to lead the effort—with Lonny Darwin—to establish a Holocaust library and research center in San Francisco, Max R. Garcia had not been active in the Jewish community. A Holocaust survivor from Holland, he had focused after his U.S. Army training on building his own architectural business and raising a family. But Earl Raab had been persuasive: Garcia had the know-how and persistence to lead the effort and, as a survivor himself, he could appreciate the mission. And Lonny Darwin, a refugee from wartime Germany and married to a prominent attorney, had the social connections to help raise the funds that would be necessary to choose and purchase the books. Besides, they both spoke English. Many at the early Committee of Remembrance meetings spoke Hebrew or Yiddish.

They would prove to be an effective team. Garcia set about to enlist as wide an audience as possible in the endeavor, starting a “letter to the public” in February 1979 with this admonition: “The history of the Holocaust is in danger of becoming extinct. It will be buried with the people who survived or witnessed it, unless we act now.” He went on to request contributions “to enable us to purchase as many publications on the subject as are available in this country, Canada, Europe, and Israel.”

While Garcia set up the structure of the organization—the Holocaust Library and Research Center Associates, as it was first known—and then incorporated it on March 20, 1979 as the Holocaust Library and Research Center of San Francisco, Darwin began an extensive acquisition campaign.

First Board of the Holocaust Center

President and Chairman: Max R. Garcia

Vice President: Lonny Darwin

Treasurer: Stanley Volansky

Frances Fabri

Greta Livingston

Rachella Gelbart

William J. Lowenberg

Martha Cohn

Karl Bach

Eric Livingston

Erna Sparer

John F. Rothmann

The secretary of the board was Ruth Callmann, and William S. Solari, the board's first legal advisor, was the first member of the organization. 639 14th Ave. was named as the official office, since the library was located in the basement of the Jewish Bureau of Education building there.

A frequent visitor to Israel and to European cities, and multilingual, Darwin had a wide range of connections and determined early on that the books in the library could be in any language. The specific purpose of the library and center was to collect and preserve data about the Nazi period and about those people who lived under or fled from the Nazi influence.

When it opened on September 9, 1979 it had 1,000 books and 200 documents, photographs, and artifacts. It was one of the largest and one of only a handful of regional collections on the subject in the country.

Darwin and Garcia and his wife, Priscilla, travelled far and wide to collect and solicit the books. As Darwin remembers, first the Committee of Remembrance asked her to survey what was available in the San Francisco Bay Area. She explored the bookstores, synagogues, libraries, and schools to see what information was offered. “There were some books, but not much study of the subject. No one even knew what countries were involved [in the Holocaust],” she said.

Darwin’s trips to New York, London, and Tel Aviv bookstores and publishers yielded the most books, and she became especially fascinated by “Yizkor books. “Yizkor means to remember,” she explained in an interview in 2012, the year she died at age 100. “It was hard to collect them because people didn’t want to part with them. The life of their ancestors is preserved in them.”

The Holocaust Center has 500 Yizkor books today—one of the largest collections available anywhere. As Darwin explains them, “Yizkor books are the product of survivors of small towns and villages in Eastern Europe that were burned down or destroyed by bombs. There was nothing left of these towns—some of which had been there from the 12th century. The books were made by survivors of camps who might have lost their whole family and got in touch with others to gather information about their hometowns: maps, photographs, documents, and remembrances—whatever they could find. We sent ads to various cities to collect information, and people came to us with information. I made these Yizkor books my pet project.”

There were many tasks to be accomplished besides the collection of books by Lonny Darwin. Early board minutes show the naming of the following committees and their chairs: fundraising (Rabbis William Dalin and George Hoffman); funds seeking (for grants); housekeeping; documents collecting (John Rothmann); oral history (Frances Fabri); publicity; and historical and special events.

The dedication was a special time for the survivors. John Felstiner, an English professor at Stanford University, gave the keynote address to the 148 people who attended. It had been determined that the library would not lend books; scholars, students, and the public would have to do their reading at the library, which would be staffed by volunteers. And, as with some of the private libraries on the East Coast established a century earlier, people could purchase memberships in the library, ranging from \$10 for students to \$25 for “regular members” and \$5,000 for benefactors.

The library quickly outgrew the space at the Jewish Community Library and in March 2005 opened its doors at 121 Steuart St., in the Jewish Federation building. In 1986, the Holocaust Library and Research Center of San Francisco was renamed the Holocaust Center of Northern California to better represent its holdings. Those holdings now comprise 12,000 books, pamphlets, and audio-visual materials; over 2,000 oral history interviews; 550 archival collections; and 500 Yizkor books.

As Rothmann explains, “The survivors felt fully invested in it.” But as the years went by, and the educational programs grew, private funding couldn’t cover all

of the expenses of staffing and program development. In 2010, San Francisco philanthropist Ingrid Tauber and Anita Friedman, the executive director of Jewish Family and Children's Services (JFCS), proposed that JFCS house the library and archives. The center might have been absorbed into a university library otherwise.

JFCS has offices in the center of the Western Addition, across Scott Street from the original Mt. Zion Hospital, now the University of California, San Francisco cancer center. The library is on the first floor—not the basement!—of a building that also houses the JFCS youth program and an office of the educational foundation Lehrhaus Judaica, at 2250 Post St. The synergies are strong—offering cross-programming of youth with survivors and students with teachers and visiting lecturers.

The programs now encompass a Speakers Bureau of Holocaust survivors; a Day of Learning at Mercy High School in San Francisco, which attracts more than 500 high school students; a teachers' resource center for Holocaust curriculum development; The Next Chapter project, where high school students interview Holocaust survivors about their wartime and life experiences, writing essays reviewed by the survivors and contributed to the library; and the Manovill Holocaust History Fellowship program for junior and senior high school students. The newest programs are legacy study tours of Eastern Europe and Israel and the publishing of memoirs—two programs partnered with Lehrhaus Judaica.

The Weiss family and friends endowed the Morris Weiss Essay Contest in 1986 to honor Morris Weiss, who dedicated his life to keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive for future generations. As his wife, Tauba, admonishes, “Education, and only education, is the way to honor the victims, the liberators, the survivors. Never forget.” The Weisses’ son Norman, a teacher, presents the award each year to the winning high school essayist.

The Yom HaShoah Annual Observance

Through these two initiatives—the memorial and the library—then, the concern for educating the public about the Holocaust was met. It remained for the Holocaust survivors and the Jewish community at large to do the delayed grieving and commemoration that had been subjugated to the task of rebuilding lives after the war. That was the mission of the Yom HaShoah Program Committee. After its earliest two years, radio personality John Rothmann became its chairman, and remained so for 26 years, until JFCS took over the role of running the annual remembrance as part of the JFCS Holocaust Center’s programs in 2010.

The first community-wide Holocaust remembrance was held at Congregation Emanu-El , San Francisco’s largest synagogue and the one that could

accommodate people with disabilities. It was held on May 3, 1978, a scant year after the Nazi bookstore incident. Co-chairs of the event were Rabbi William Dalin and Erna Sparer, who ran the Montefiore program at the Jewish Community Center.

Rothmann remembers the many firsts of this observance in San Francisco: “We were the first community in the country to honor Raoul Wallenberg, in 1979. We were one of the first to bring Jan Karski, a Polish Catholic of great integrity. We also brought Rudolf Vrba, one of only two men to escape from Auschwitz.

“We had the people who lived the story and were now in San Francisco speak. When we wanted to honor the liberators, Doug Kahn, later the executive director of the JCRC, was instrumental in organizing this program. It was amazing to see the survivors put a special medallion [designed by Max Garcia] around the necks of the liberators.”

The first program met the goals defined by the Committee of Remembrance: it offered a short religious service arranged by the rabbis of the various synagogues in San Francisco. This was followed by a musical program arranged by the cantors, with music by the Yiddish Folk Chorus and by a children’s chorus from the Peninsula. There was then a presentation to the righteous Gentile Herman Graebe and speeches from ghetto fighter Natan Gurevitz and Rabbi Harold Schulweiss. It had been decided after much discussion that the program should be in English with some Yiddish.

Natan Graebe had worked for the German State Railroads in World War II and saved more than 300 Jews and numerous Catholics and Protestants by designing a rail line that went nowhere. He moved Jews by train, pretending that his orders came directly from Hitler; and no one questioned him. By 1944 he was sending rescue trains across Europe, becoming a double agent for the United States. He was the only German to testify for the prosecution at the Nuremberg Trials, for he had witnessed the slaughter of 5,000 Jews at Dubno and 25,000 mass killings.

One thousand people came to this first observance to say Kaddish for the dead and to celebrate the 30th anniversary of the State of Israel. The “lights of remembrance” were kindled by survivors Frances Fabri, Max Garcia, Bella Kopik, William Lowenberg, Abraham Mencharsh, and Noach Piotrowski. The seventh candle of hope and reconstruction was kindled by Hana and Yifta Mieri of Israel. The Kaddish was led by the rabbi, Theodore Alexander, who led the congregation at the synagogue across the street from the Nazi bookstore, and Herbert Morris.

The next year’s observance featured a “scholar in residence”—Abba Kovner, one of Israel’s foremost poets and a survivor of the Vilna ghetto, and his wife, Vitha, a psychiatric social worker. They spent six weeks in San Francisco, visiting universities and holding small meetings with Jewish youth and adults. And the third year featured Leon Bass. As a 19-year-old soldier serving in a black unit of

the U.S. Army, he had participated in the liberation of Buchenwald concentration camp in 1945.

“At the end of every observance, the survivors would come and say ‘thank you’ to the community that had ignored them for so long, although not intentionally. Who knew how to deal with the Holocaust?” Rothmann asks rhetorically, adding,

“Do you know what it’s like to sit around the table for more than a quarter of a century with Holocaust survivors—to hear their stories? The greatest fear of the survivors was that when they were gone, there would be no more witnesses to remember. Yet, thanks to the work of the survivors and of the JCRC and JFCS, as well as the dedication of legions of volunteers who have worked in the survivor community all these years, we have succeeded in fulfilling our mission: to build a memorial, a library and educational program, and an annual observance so no one will forget ...”

Acknowledgments

Thanks to the JFCS Holocaust Center’s library archives, the *j weekly* (formerly the *San Francisco Jewish Bulletin*), the *San Francisco Examiner*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and the Jewish Community Relations Council, we were able to establish this brief history of the founding of three pioneering initiatives in the San Francisco Bay Area to commemorate the sufferings and lessons of the Holocaust. Because of the dedication and efforts of many survivors not named here, San Francisco became a national leader in Holocaust education and remembrance.

We are also so grateful to those quoted in these pages. Their reminiscences of these initiatives and of their experiences during the war years (1936 – 1945) during video interviews with JFCS staff Victoria Cooper and Judy Janec and videographers Michael Schwartz and Yoav Potash enlivened the story of the founding of our city's Holocaust Center, Holocaust Memorial, and annual Yom HaShoah observance. The video interviews will be preserved at the Tauber Holocaust Library at the JFCS Holocaust Center.