



Roots and Branches

Holocaust Survivor Discovers Roots Through Genealogy

By Miriam Weiner

For survivors of the Holocaust, precious family photos and documents are seldom found in old shoeboxes. Most mementos and family records were left behind and ultimately lost forever.

When Emmy Mogilensky of Baltimore left Germany on a children's transport for England, she was 14 years old. She and her brother survived while their parents and other relatives perished. When conversations turn to one's extended family, she becomes silent. However, her children are full of questions about her childhood and their grandparents.

"I have no graves to visit. There is a huge hole and pain where my past should have been," she says.

While living in Albany, N.Y., Emmy spoke frequently throughout the community about her experiences during the Holocaust. One day, following one of her lectures, a genealogist came up to her and there began a friendship which was to affect each of their lives, in different ways.

As Emmy learned more about the various sources for documenting her family history, she became further motivated to seek out one surviving aunt and through conversations with her, was able to locate a few old photos of her mother's family.

Early in the 17th century, Emmy's family, the Huberts, settled in the small village of Cronheim in Bavaria, Germany. Her paternal grandparents died when she was young and her recollections about them were vague.

"I knew virtually nothing about my father's side of the family until one day when I received a package containing photostats of pages in the official Cronheim records." These records, dating back to 1783, listed

many Hubert relatives, giving such details as date, occupation and reason for the entry. Suddenly, she was linked to generations of family members whose lives were duly noted and recorded.

In Emmy's case, her roots are in Germany. The Family History Library in Salt Lake City has

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German-Jewish records on microfilm including births, marriages, deaths, divorces, cemetery and census records, circumcisions, family names and school records. The listing for Cronheim includes birth, marriage and death records dating back to 1810.

In addition to Germany, Jewish records are available for Poland, Hungary and France. These records are available throughout the world in branch libraries of the Family History Library and can be obtained within six to eight weeks of the request.

To date, the Soviet Union has not allowed its records to be filmed by any libraries in the West.

The records Emmy received documented one branch of her family going back 200 years. "Can you imagine what this gift means to my children? At first, they simply stared in disbelief at entry after entry. By touching the names of those long ago Huberts with their fingertips, they touched their past — their heritage — that part of themselves which had been missing."

As we walk in the footsteps of

our ancestors, that link with the past becomes a precious legacy for future generations. For survivors, even more so. The records are waiting there for you — now is the time to look for them.

"When my grandchildren are older, they, too, will appreciate the meaning of these records," Emmy said. "They, too, will read, touch and feel a unity with family members long gone, but not forgotten — not now!"

Emmy Mogilensky lives in Baltimore where she is on the staff of the Jewish Historical Society of Maryland. In addition, she serves on the Executive Committee of the American Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and is a member of the New York Holocaust Memorial Commission.

Mogilensky is an adviser to the New York State Holocaust Resource Center in Albany and is on the Advisory Committee that developed the Human Rights Series, Volume II, entitled "Teaching About the Holocaust and Genocide" which is used in schools throughout New York State.

In 1981, she was the subject of a documentary entitled "Emmy" that focused on her during the 1981 World Gathering of Jewish Holocaust Survivors in Jerusalem.

Miriam Weiner, a certified genealogist, has prepared a beginners's guide (55 pages) on how to research family history that includes charts, list of archives and libraries, bibliography, maps, family group sheets and more. It can be ordered for \$10 and \$2.50 postage/handling by writing to her at 136 Sandpiper Key, Secaucus, NJ 07094.