

Betty Lifshin Simon

Betty Simon, born in 1933, was the youngest of eleven children of Jacob Lifshin and Rachel Lifshin, of Kazsian, Białoruś (White Rus), today Belarus. Rachel died when Betty was only a year and a half old. Jacob Lifshin, an intelligent man, had many friends in the community. Jacob Lifshin educated his nine sons, and for those that did not go on to advanced studies, he provided a piece of land. At that time Jewish people were not permitted to own property, but because Jacob was highly esteemed, he was able to secure land for his sons.

104 In 1939, the Nazis made a ghetto in Betty's hometown, which they subsequently liquidated, transferring the occupants to a larger ghetto; Betty was imprisoned in the latter ghetto for one and a half years. Betty recalls hunger and working very hard for a small piece of bread. In 1941, Jacob realized that the entire family would be killed; therefore, he devised a plan to save his daughters' lives. Jacob contacted a very religious and good Catholic man, Voyzche Gintaiv, who promised to care for Jacob's daughters. Betty and her sister were instructed to dress as "non-Jewish" and to escape from the ghetto. Following their escape, Voyzche Gintaiv picked the girls up and settled them in his barn. A week after their rescue, Voyzche went back to the ghetto to try to save more people and was murdered by the Nazis. After the murder of Jacob's friend, Betty's brothers, who were hiding in the forest, took Betty, her sister, Nechama, and Voyzche Gintaiv's two daughters into the forest; another of Betty's brothers brought Jacob from the ghetto to the forest. The Lifshins remained in hiding in the forest for two and a half years.

When the war ended, Betty and her family tried to return to their hometown, but Betty recalls, "Not even one house was left." The Lifshins went to another town, where Betty became ill with malaria, and her sister, with pneumonia. After the family recovered from the illnesses, Jacob contracted cancer and died within two weeks.

Betty and her sister wanted to go to Israel but the only way was via a children's home program. So the sisters went to Austria where their brothers were. Then, in a displaced person's camp in early 1948, Betty met Richard Simon, her future husband, who was on his way to the United States to join his family. Through the children's home, Betty made her way to the United States.

After arriving in the United States, Betty continued to live in the children's home, attending school. In the meantime, Richard had arrived in Baltimore to reunite with his family: his parents, brother, and two sisters. After marrying in 1950, Betty and Richard owned a chicken farm in Pleasantville, NJ, along with his father and brother. Richard was deeply unhappy with life on the chicken farm and, therefore, decided to go into real estate in which he prospered.

Betty and Richard have four children, Marsha, Jacob, Renee, and Valerie, ten grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren. Richard died in 2005; Betty Simon lives in Ventnor, NJ.

Sonia Chelemska Kaplan

Sonia Kaplan (nee Chelemska) was born in 1929 in the city of Włodzimierz Volynski, Poland, with a population of 36,000 Jews, in the vicinity of that city. Sonia was the oldest of four children of Rabbi Boruch Moshe and Gittel Hannah, the owners of two businesses. In 1936 Sonia's father died of lung cancer.

In 1939 when World War II began, her city was bombed by the Germans, and their home caught fire and burnt down with all of their belongings. Shortly after, her city was occupied by the Soviets, who confiscated the merchandise in her parents' stores. In 1941 when Germany attacked Soviet occupied eastern Poland, Sonia's city fell into the hands of the Nazis. Sonia and her family, along with 20,000 other Jews, were put into a ghetto where during periodic *oblavas* (raids) Jews were taken to the outskirts, shot, and buried in pits. Between September 1942 and December 1943 the ghetto suffered three pogroms (Ger.: *Aktions*). Sonia's family was killed during the first pogrom. Sonia managed to survive the final liquidation of the ghetto, escaping to a hiding place arranged by her mother with a Polish family who had been given silver and gold by her mother. However, in less than two weeks, the family threw her out. A second Polish family hid her on a farm for three months. Then Sonia fled to the forest where she joined Russian partisans for four months and was liberated there in July 1944. At fifteen she was the only survivor of an extended family of eighty-six members.

After liberation Sonia traveled from Poland to Salzburg, Austria, to a displaced persons' camp, where she met Kadysh Kaplan, a survivor of Auschwitz-Birkenau, Gross-Rosen, and Buchenwald Concentration Camps. Sonia and Kadysh married in 1945 and immigrated to the United States in December of 1948, arriving in Philadelphia. In 1954 the couple had a chicken farm in Mays Landing, New Jersey. Later Sonia was in the hotel business in Atlantic City.

Sonia now lives in Atlantic City, NJ. She has three children, two daughters, Ellen and Gloria, a son, David, and is blessed with six grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. Sonia is the subject of the documentary, *Broken Silence*, produced by her daughter Ellen Kaplan Wetzel in 2003, and the author of the memoir, *My Endless War: My Shattered Dreams*, published in 2004.

Arnold Weitzenhof

Arnold Weitzenhof was born in Galicia, near Kraków, in Gdov, Poland, on April 1, 1929—the baby of the family. His family called him Oldek. His parents, Rose and Isaac Lieb, had two other sons: Szymek (Simon), an artist, born in 1921, and, in 1923, Samek (Sam), who would have taken over the family bakery and grocery store. His parents wanted Arnold to be a dentist because he had beautiful, artist's hands.

In 1939, Gdov was occupied by the *Wehrmacht*, soldiers of the German armed forces, who treated the family well because Arnold's father had served in the Austrian army during World War I. However, in 1940 the SS and Gestapo made the town *Judenfrei* (free of Jews). Arnold's father was shot during a *razzia* (round-up); his mother sent to Belżec Death Camp. Arnold, only twelve years old, and his brothers were taken to Stalowa Wola concentration camp, from which they escaped a few months later to the Kraków Ghetto. Arnold's oldest brother was shot while crossing the border; his middle brother died in the Kraków Ghetto. By the time the war was over, Arnold had survived four different camps—Stalowa Wola, Julag One, Płaszów, and Częstochowa.

The only survivor of his family, Arnold immigrated to New Jersey in 1947 when he worked at a diner and later in a luggage factory. When the factory burned down, his friend suggested he go to hairdressing school. Arnold retired as a successful hairdresser fifteen years ago and moved to Galloway with his wife, Gloria, a retired accountant.

In December 2006, Arnold published his memoir: *This I Remember: A Polish Youth Survives the Shoah*. Arnold, who died on January 28, 2007, is survived by his wife, Gloria, son, Richard, daughter-in-law, Sandra, and two grandchildren.

Ruth Zinman

Ruth Zinman, a child during World War II, was born in Oradea, Transylvania, in western Romania; her mother was a dentist; her father, a doctor. After being caught by the police at the border en route to Russia, her family was forced to spend a night in a Bucharest jail. Ruth and her mother were released the next day. Her mother then sent Ruth to Hungary to stay with her cousins, so she could work and raise money to bail out Ruth's father. But after finding out that the cousins were to be deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, her mother sent Ruth back to Oradea to stay with a peasant family. Ruth's mother retrieved her and the family was reunited for a short time. While her parents were working illegally, providing medical and dental care, her father was conscripted by the Romanian army.

After the war, Ruth's family moved to Israel where Ruth met David, an American tourist. They were married in 1962, and she immigrated to the United States a year later. They had three children and four grandchildren.

Ruth has been teaching Hebrew in various synagogue schools since 1965. She now lives in Ventnor and continues teaching and educating young people about the Holocaust. Her ultimate goal is to raise pride and awareness of Jewish heritage and history in the younger generations.

Nella Gelberg Juffe

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Nella Gelberg Juffe was born on January 15, 1932 in Chrubieszow, Poland; however, she was raised in Chelm, Poland, near Majdanek. In September 1, 1939, the Soviets came into her city—by mistake. Then the Germans attacked, bombing the city. The Soviets told the people to flee to Soviet occupied territory because the Germans would kill them. So the Gelberg family escaped to Lvov in 1939. In 1941 the Germans broke their pact with the Soviets, attacking Lvov. Nella's father then joined the Soviet Army, but soon they received word that he was MIA. (Many years later the family was notified that he had died in August of 1941.) The Russians gave Nella's family and another family a horse and wagon to go to the Ural Mountains; however, the horse died on the way. They began walking with German bombs exploding all around them. They were captured by the Germans and put in a concentration camp, in Lgov, Ukraine, near Babi Yar. There were only twenty-six Jews in the camp because so many had already been killed. Soon they were twenty-five because the Germans killed an old man. In 1945 they were liberated by the Soviets, who moved them to a house with a thatched roof that goats ate. In 1946 the Polish government told the Soviets to release the Polish citizens; therefore, Nella, her mother, and sister were put on a cattle train for four weeks, traveling back toward Chelm, Poland. At Majdanek, they discovered that all the rest of their extended family had been killed in this death camp. The family never reached Chelm because news of the pogroms reached them and they got off the train. With the help of the underground Jewish military organization, *Haganah*, they were smuggled to Czechoslovakia, then Austria, and finally to the American Zone in Germany. Nella and her sister had been separated from their mother at the border, so they were sent to a kibbutz for orphans—Kibbutz Hashomer Hatzair, from where they were supposed to go on the ship the *Exodus* to Israel. By this time Nella's mother, living in Kassel, Germany, had found her name in the *Forward* newspaper, and with an aunt's help kept her from leaving. Nella, her mother, and sister went to three DP Camps: Föhrenwald, Ulm, and Wasser-Altsinger, where, in 1948, Nella met Leon Juffe whom she married in November of 1948. Their son, Samuel, was born on January 14, 1950, in Germany.

In 1950, six weeks after Samuel was born, the family immigrated to the United States, arriving on Ellis Island, one of the last immigrants to be sent there. In the U.S. with hard work and determination, they built themselves a new life: they bought a chicken farm in Vineland in 1953 and later bought the Kentucky Hotel in Atlantic City. Off season, Nella worked in a clothing factory making Eisenhower jackets.

Nella and Leon have prospered, raising four sons—Samuel, Michael, Irving, and Gene. They have seven beloved grandchildren. They now live in Margate.

Leon Juffe

Leon Juffe was born in Złoczow, near Ternopol, Poland, on September 4, 1921. From 1942 until 1944, for sixteen long months, six people—Leon, his mother, two sisters, one brother, and a friend—hid in an underground hole disguised as a manure heap. His father and other family members had been deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau where they were murdered. They had to use bamboo sticks to breathe, and they survived on food given to them once a day by a Polish family. Every day they gave the Polish woman one of the gold pieces that their grandfather had given them. The group was liberated by the Soviets in 1944. When the war ended Leon traveled to Germany, where he met his wife, Nella Gelberg, in Wasser Displaced Persons' Camp.

68 In 1950, they immigrated to the United States, where Leon worked in a clock factory for 75¢ an hour. The woman who owned the factory was very mean; she didn't hire Jews, so Leon, who had blonde hair, had to pretend he was non-Jewish. She even tried to trick him by speaking Yiddish to him, but he didn't answer her; therefore, she hired him. After six months, when he picked up his last paycheck, he asked her what she had against Jews. She told him that she had lost a factory because Jews had organized a union there. Leon told her, "Isn't it enough that six million Jews were killed in Europe? Why do you have to hate all Jews for what a few did to you?"

In 1953, Leon and Nella bought a poultry farm in Vineland, and later they became hotel owners. They have a comfortable life and are happy to have lived to raise their four children and to enjoy their seven grandchildren. They live in Margate, NJ.

Harry Hirsch

Harry Hirsch was born on April 23, 1923 in Kouchiv, Poland. His parents, Jacob Mordechai Herschkowitz and Torte Herschkowitz, had nine children: one daughter and eight sons. (Only Harry and one of his brothers survived.) Harry was an apprentice carpenter, but when he was sixteen, he was deported to his first concentration camp, one of three. The last camp was Auschwitz-Birkenau, where he made bread that he would smuggle back to other people.

After liberation, Harry met Sophie in a displaced persons camp; they married and lived in Nordheim, Germany. In 1951, he and Sophie immigrated to the United States. At U.S. Customs they shortened his name to Hirsch.

For a time Harry and Sophie stayed in Philadelphia; Harry worked as a carpenter. Then they moved to Corbin City where they bought a chicken farm. This developed into a food business. They later moved to Vineland where they continued their food business. They delivered to Cape May, and because both liked the area, they decided to buy property. In 1966, they built a hotel in Cape May called the Montreal Inn, which he and Sophie operated, until she passed away in 1975.

Harry recently moved to Seashore Gardens Living Center, where his close friend, Ruth Satt, lives. Harry said he is most proud that he survived and made a life for his family. His family includes Larry and Miriam and their sons, Evan and Jonathan, and Joseph and Amy and their daughters, Sophie and Abbie.

Tom Kennedy

Tom Kennedy was born on March 6, 1929 in Budapest, Hungary. From age three to thirteen, Tom lived with his parents in the countryside. Then in 1943 he moved to Budapest to live with an uncle. Tom is the sole survivor of his family—his parents, brother, and sister, and two uncles all died in concentration camps. Tom escaped deportation by living on the streets of Budapest and in burned out buildings, until he was taken into the safe houses under the Swedish flag. At one of the safe houses, he met Raoul Wallenberg, a Swedish diplomat, and Tom helped him deliver Swedish passports (*Schutzpasses*), which declared the bearers to be under the protection of Sweden. Tom faced danger delivering these *Schutzpasses* to Jews in hiding and living in the ghetto. The Russians occupied Budapest in 1945; a year later Tom fled to Austria and lived in various displaced persons' camps until, in 1948, he was admitted to the United States as a war orphan.

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Tom is a retired United States Air Force Major and was a hotel human resource director. He now lives in Margate with his wife, Bonnie.

Rosalie Lebovic Simon

On July 25, 1931, Rosalie Lebovic Simon was born in Teresva, Czechoslovakia, one of six Lebovic children—five daughters and one son. Rosalie's father, Israel, was a wholesale importer of fruits. Her mother, Regina, kept a kosher home. Rosalie has happy memories of life in Tresea, living in a neighborhood where many children played and attending the public school that she loved. In 1938 the Hungarians took over Tresea, and in 1944 the Germans occupied her town. In that same year, Jewish children, including Rosalie, one of the school's best students, were expelled. On the sixth day of Passover in 1944, the family was taken to the Mátészalka Ghetto, and then in May 1944, deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where Rosalie, only twelve years old, was selected to go with her mother to the gas chambers. Running to her sisters Rosalie lived and was sent along with her sisters to Geislingen Slave Labor Camp in Germany and later to Allach, a sub-camp of Dachau. Liberated with her sisters in May of 1945, the family, with their father who had survived Buchenwald Concentration Camp, settled temporarily in Ústi Nad Labem, the northwest of Czechoslovakia, before immigrating to the United States in November of 1949.

Arriving in New York on Ellis Island, Rosalie and her family settled in Baltimore, Maryland, where she met Sidney Simon in English class. They married two years later. After leaving Baltimore and Sidney's prosperous scrap metal business, Rosalie and Sidney moved to Pleasantville, NJ, to the poultry farm that they owned and managed, along with his father and brother. In 1962 the couple moved to Margate and Sidney became a land developer. The couple have three children and five grandchildren. Rosalie is writing her memoir, working title—*Five Sisters: Five Survivors of Auschwitz-Birkenau Death Camp*.

Phillip Goldfarb

Phillip Goldfarb, born in Sêdziszów Malopolski in the province of Kraków, was the youngest of nine children. When the Germans occupied Poland in 1939, Phillip fled east, from where he was deported by the Soviet Union to Siberia to the taiga (boreal forest) where he labored cutting trees. Next he was sent to the desert of Kazakhstan to harvest saxoul trees, used for fuel. After surviving two typhus attacks, Phillip worked as a foreman at a Soviet store in Kuskuduk, Kazakhstan.

In 1946, Phillip traveled to his hometown hoping to find some of his family. He already knew that his mother, brother Oscar, and two sisters-in-law had been killed in Belżec Death Camp and that his brothers Selig and Pinek had been murdered when the Nazis had liquidated their labor battalion. None of his family was there, so Phillip left Sêdziszów, journeying to Austria and Germany, where he stayed in several displaced persons' camps, meeting and marrying his wife, Celia, in 1949. Later he discovered that his brothers Julius, Isaac, and Wolf had survived

Phillip immigrated to the United States in 1949, living with his sister, Anna, who had immigrated to the US before the war. Soon Phillip was reunited with his wife, Celia, who had gone first to Canada. They bought a chicken farm in South Jersey in the early 1950s. After Celia died, in 1984, Phillip sold the farm and moved to Somers Point. Phillip now lives with his son, Arthur, and daughter-in-law, Dale. He has two grandchildren. Phillip's memoir, *The Pear Tree Did Not Survive: A Memoir of a Shtetl Boyhood, Siberian Labor Camps, and the Aftermath of the Holocaust* was published in 2007. Phillip is translating his brother Julius's diary, which will be published in 2009.

Betty Kohn Grebenschikoff

Betty Kohn Grebenschikoff was born in Berlin, Germany, in 1929. Although her father had lived in Germany for many years and had fought in World War I, because he had been born in Czechoslovakia, neither he nor his wife, Olga, nor their daughters, Betty and Edith, had German passports. After witnessing the tragic events of *Kristallnacht* (The November Pogrom—November 9-10, 1938), the family immigrated to Shanghai, China, the only country that would accept people without passports or visas. After Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, the Japanese, who had occupied China since 1937, moved the family into a ghetto. This “segregated district” in Shanghai was crowded with 20,000 Jewish refugees and the area was unsanitary.

In August 1945, Betty and her family were liberated by American troops. Betty remained in China, meeting and marrying her husband, Oleg Grebenschikoff, a “White” Russian. In 1949 when China became Communist, Betty, pregnant with her first child, and Oleg, her husband, immigrated to Australia, where they stayed until 1953. Then they obtained visas for the United States where she was reunited with her parents and sister, Edith, eventually settling in Brigantine, New Jersey. In New Jersey, Oleg taught physical education in the Absecon School District.

Betty raised her children and then wrote her memoir: *Once My Name Was Sara* in 1992, with a new edition in 2005. She continues to lecture at schools and colleges. She is featured in the 2002 award-winning documentary: *Shanghai Ghetto*. Betty and Oleg have five children (Nina died in an accident in 1984), seven grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. Oleg died in 2004. Betty now travels between New Jersey and Florida when she isn’t in China or India.

Donald Berkman

Donald (Chipkin) Berkman, born on January 25, 1941 in Druysk, Poland (now Belarus), was an infant when his family was forced into first a small ghetto and then a larger one. Awaiting deportation to the Vilna Ghetto, Donald's mother, Sarah, begged her husband and other family members to go into hiding, but they refused. The rest of the family was sent to Vilna and were then massacred at Ponary, on the outskirts of Vilna, by *Einsatzgruppen* (mobile killing squads). Sarah hid her son and herself in a closet and thus escaped the round up and murder. Sarah and Donald were hidden in a convent for a while but had to flee the approaching Nazis. His mother and Donald then hid in the woods for two and a half years, until the Russians came in 1945. They fled to Berlin where they stayed four years in displaced persons' camps in Germany—West Berlin, Ziegenhain, and Eschwege—until immigrating to the United States in 1949.

A storeowner, Don lives in Margate with his wife, Nanette. Donald has three children and five grandchildren.