

RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS PROGRAM

“Attitudes towards the Jews during the Holocaust mostly ranged from indifference to hostility. The mainstream watched as their former neighbors were rounded up and killed; some collaborated with the perpetrators; many benefited from the expropriation of the Jews property.

In a world of total moral collapse there was a small minority who mustered extraordinary courage to uphold human values. These were the Righteous Among the Nations. They stand in stark contrast to the mainstream of indifference and hostility that prevailed during the Holocaust. Contrary to the general trend, these rescuers regarded the Jews as fellow human beings who came within the bounds of their universe of obligation.”

-*Yad Vashem*

The Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre of the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada is currently interested in hearing from Holocaust survivors who were helped by Gentiles during the Holocaust and who would like to recognize these Righteous Among the Nations by dedicating a plaque in their honour. A special area reserved for the Righteous Among the Nations plaques was set aside outside the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre when the Centre was founded. As time passes, we would like to ensure that all survivors who would like to pay tribute to the brave men and women who risked their lives and those of their families to protect them should have the opportunity to do so.

As a further way of honouring these wonderful people, the Holocaust Education Centre together with the Jewish Federation of Winnipeg are planning a very special program during Holocaust Awareness Week to celebrate their bravery. Further details will be made available closer to the event.

Please contact Belle Millo, Chair of the Freeman Family Foundation Holocaust Education Centre for additional information, by leaving a message for her at the Jewish Heritage Centre office - 477-7460.

Dr. Stefan Carter, one of our local survivors, chose to honour the memory of three Polish Christian women, without whose help he and members of his family would not have survived. His experiences were described in part in *Voices of Winnipeg Holocaust Survivors*, edited by Belle Millo, designed by Gustavo Rymberg and available at the Jewish Heritage Centre of Western Canada:

Stefan Carter was born and raised in Warsaw and entered the Warsaw Ghetto with his parents in November 1940. In September 1942, when Stefan was 14 years old, the

population of the Ghetto had dwindled from about 500,000 to about 60,000, as a result of transports of the Ghetto inhabitants in cattle car trains to the gas chambers of Treblinka. Stefan, with his mother, was attached to a German factory when on the 6th of September; the order came for all workers to proceed to the Umschlagplatz under penalty of death. Stefan's mother, Janina, was very weak and emaciated by a bout of dysentery and despite her valiant efforts to summon all her strength and to appear as best she could, with the help of Stefan running to a pharmacy to get for her an ampoule of glucose, and Janina dressing her best and putting on lipstick, the terrible moment came when Janina was motioned to the trains and Stefan to return to work at the factory. He was never to see his mother again.

As Stefan continued, devastated by losing his mother, a surprising phone call came through in October from the Aryan side. On the line was the voice of his cousin, Tadeusz (Tadzik), the son of Stefan's mother's sister, his Aunt Pauline, who had lived in Kraków before the war. When WWII broke out, Stefan's uncle Dr. Edmund Rosenhauch, a renowned ophthalmologist, and his wife Pauline and sons Zdzich and Tadzik, had travelled eastward and ended up in Lwów, under the Soviet occupation. After the Germans overran Lwów, during the 1941 campaign into the Soviet Union, Stefan's uncle and aunt had gone into hiding and his cousins had obtained "Aryan" documents, making their way to Warsaw where they lived and worked on the Aryan side. Stefan informed Tadzik of Janina's terrible fate. Arrangements were made for Stefan to leave the Ghetto and meet Tadzik on the other side at a specific time on a specific day. Before leaving the Ghetto, Stefan went through empty streets to say goodbye to his father who was staying in another part of the Ghetto. They parted, never to see each other again. Stefan's father had been apprehensive about leaving the Ghetto himself, because of his very "Jewish" looks.



Stefan with his mother in August 1939 in the mountain resort of Zakopane, Poland.

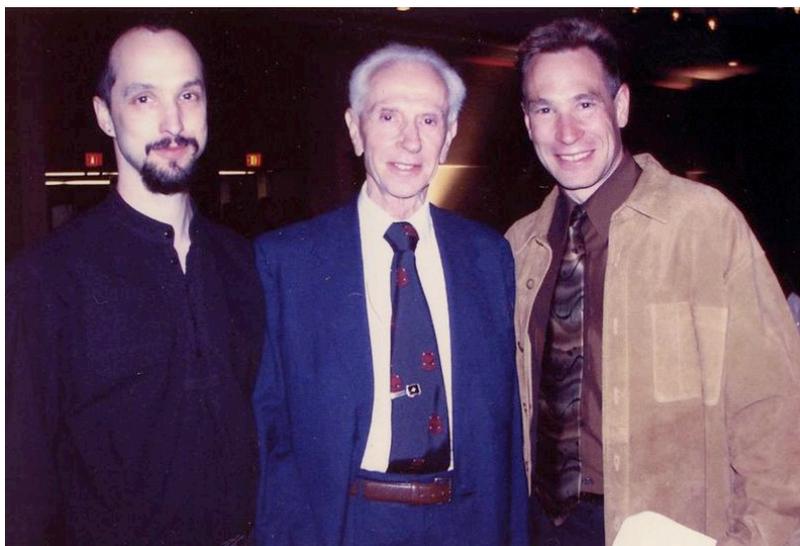
Tadzik took Stefan to the apartment where he and his older brother, Zdzich, lived with a Polish family, **Hanka Herfurt and her mother Zofia**. Their help was essential to theirs' and Stefan's survival. Stefan stayed there overnight. The next evening, Zdzich took him to the suburb of Praga, on the other side of the Vistula River. They walked through the streets and over the bridge in darkness (on purpose because of Stefan's curved Semitic nose). In Praga, Stefan stayed with a Polish family for some weeks and then was moved to other places.

Among them, Stefan stayed for nearly two years at the apartment of **Miss Zofia Różycka**, who lived with her elderly mother in one of the Warsaw's suburbs. There, he had a nice room where he spent most of his time. In it was a bookcase filled with the complete works of Molière, translated into Polish, all

of which he read to fill the time. Because of Stefan's "Jewish" looks, he could not go outside. Miss Różycka was very kind and brought books from a lending library for Stefan to read, which she continued to do throughout his stay. He also spent many hours talking and discussing all kind of subjects with her and her friend Mr. Witold. Through these discussions and his readings, Stefan became aware of all kinds of issues and realized for the first time in his life that he was no longer a child.

Unfortunately, in 1944 it had become obvious that one of Miss Różycka's neighbours had had began to suspect that Stefan was Jewish and it was felt that it was not safe for him to stay with her any longer. She notified Tadeusz, who, with his family, made arrangements to take Stefan to a clinic. There, a specialist operated on his nose under local anaesthetic to straighten it. After a few days, when the bruising had subsided; Stefan left the clinic. His cousins had obtained false Aryan papers for him and found another place for him to live with a Polish family, who did not know that he was Jewish. With his "new" nose, he was able to move about freely, went out and seemed to live the life of a Polish youth.

Meanwhile Stefan's aunt and uncle had many close calls, but obtained essential help from a Polish friend, **Danuta Krzeszewska, and her mother, Florentyna**, who helped them to hide. On August 1st, 1944, the Polish underground Army began an uprising against the Germans. Soon the Germans took the area where Stefan lived and after being taken to a transit camp in Pruszków, he was sent to a village in the country where he lived until the end of the war. His uncle and aunt, as well as his cousin Zdzich also survived. Unfortunately, Tadzik was killed, together with Danuta Krzeszewska. They had volunteered to work in a hospital for the insurgents and were hit by a German bomb while carrying a wounded insurgent to the shelter.



With sons Andrew, left, and Joel, right in 2003.