

## **FJMC TORCH AWARD APPLICATION**

**CATEGORY** – Best not included in any of the other categories

**PROJECT TITLE** – Men’s Club Cooperative Effort

**CLUB NAMES** –

Beth David	Temple Beth Sholom
19700 Prospect Road	10700 Havenwood Lane
Saratoga, CA 95070	Las Vegas, NV 89135

**DESCRIPTION OF ENTRY** – Explains how a discussion at the 2003 FJMC Convention Torch Award exhibits was successful in promoting another Club’s ongoing Holocaust program.

**WHY WAS THE PROJECT INITIATED** – To enhance and provide impact to an already successful community informational program.

**PROJECT DESCRIPTION** – As encouraged by the FJMC, this project involves the partnering and cooperation of two Men’s Club groups from different states. A request for an invaluable paving stone from the Las Vegas Warsaw Ghetto project was granted to help strengthen and provide impact to the Saratoga’s Club Holocaust community informational program.

By Jerry Katz

This is a joint entry Torch Award exemplifying how two clubs in two different states, can work together to create a meaningful experience.

At the 2003 FJMC Convention in Ft. Lauderdale, the Temple Beth Sholom Men’s Club, Las Vegas, Nevada, was presented a gold Torch Award for its sponsorship of the highly praised Warsaw Ghetto Remembrance Garden. The highlight of the Garden is the placement of over 200 actual paving stones that were removed from Chlodna Street from the Warsaw Ghetto. During convention, Dr. Robert Katz, Beth David Men’s Club, Saratoga, California asked attendee Jerry Katz (no relation), representing Beth Sholom, if it was possible to get one of the historic paving stones for a Holocaust program that he was doing. Upon returning from convention, Jerry Katz discussed the request for a stone with the Men’s Club Remembrance Garden Committee. The request was approved and one stone was selected from the supply that was set aside for the final phase of the Garden’s construction. The stone was shipped to Dr. Katz as a contribution from the Temple Beth Sholom Men’s Club.

But what could Dr. Katz do with just one stone. The following is how the single stone was used as an important part of his Holocaust remembrance program.

By Dr. Robert Katz

It gives me great pleasure to report that we made the best possible use of this one particular stone. It became the focal point of a lecture series detailing the exploits and heroism of not only the Warsaw ghetto fighters, but all other Jewish Resistance movements throughout World War 2 Europe and became a symbolic centerpiece for a range of lectures that were given at Chabad shuls, Reform temples and Orthodox and Conservative synagogues. Even a few Reconstructionists and atheists got into the act and sponsored parlor meetings to hear of the vaunted exploits of The Jewish Military Resistance during World War 2. Places, names and heroic people came to life, as once again, their deeds were recounted. In addition, essays were written and published in various magazines and newsletters detailing the program. Attached is an example of one essay that was published in the ALLGENERATIONS email magazine and also the South Bay Holocaust Survivors' Group newsletter, in addition to various other Holocaust related publications:

All in all, each lecture and program was met with great enthusiasm and the highlight of each and every venue was when I would silently pass through the crowd and all present would reach out to touch the stone, or they would line up and silently walk by and lovingly touch the stone, and be touched in a way that could not have possibly been effected by any other means. The stone truly took on a voice of its own, and in so doing, touched the lives of many.

And so we submit this as our joint entry to the Torch Awards. The program can be duplicated by a determined few and is guaranteed to have a big impact -- not only on the older crowd that have their history redefined from one of hapless victim to enduring hero and hearty survivor but to the youth that, for the first time in their lives, hear that the Jews did not "go like sheep to the slaughter". And for many that is a timeless message, applicable in their own lives that they desperately needed to hear.

“If These Stones Could Speak”  
By Dr. Robert Katz

(Dedicated to Gerson Reibstein Z " L", food smuggler, Resistance operative, and family member)

Today, April 29, marks the day Dachau was liberated by American soldiers in 1945.

I gave a talk last night to a capacity crowd at a nursing/old age home. Always nice to have a captive audience. I've always been wildly popular with the senile set -- the over 80 cutie pies with white hair and walkers. I kiss their hands and they tend to swoon -- probably an adverse reaction to their multiple medications. The under 80 female set wouldn't be seen dead with me in any self-respecting mid-size metropolis. Such are the vagaries of life.

It was a Holocaust memorial program and my co-speaker was Alicia Appleman-Jurman, author, Resistance fighter --and one of the pre-eminent speakers in the field. She's always beside herself with joy when she can get me to speak. She's simply divine.

I opened with my usual " take no prisoners " approach. It's always a raucous affair when I get warmed up. The Southern Baptists used to love my " fire and brimstone " style --- think they were sneakin' some o' that contraband moonshine. In any event, my first true tale was of Abraham Lissner, veteran of The Jewish Botvin Company, who fought against Franco in 1937, alongside the heavily Jewish -American Abraham Lincoln Brigade, in the first face-off against the rising tide of Fascism/Nazism. I spoke of the much-vaunted Maquis -- The French Resistance. But per usual, the Jewish contribution was downplayed. Historian and author L. Poliakov writes: "Jews played a very prominent role in the organizations of the French resistance. It is a little known but nevertheless indisputable fact that the Jews made up 15 to 20 per cent of the active membership in those groups, although they constituted less than 1 per cent of the French population." Lissner, working in his capacity as one of the organizers and leaders of the Jewish Partisan Unit of Paris, documented severe losses inflicted on the Nazi enemy. Troop convoys being an especially juicy target.

I also spoke of sabotage and active resistance wherever weapons could be obtained -- only scratching the surface with talk of shadowy units like The Dresden Group led ably by Werner Witebski and Max Zimmering --or the operations organized by Dachau concentration camp internees Heinz Heshen and Hanz Litten. The Buchenwald group under Rudi Arndt was duly noted, as were, most incredibly, the death-defying acts of the Herbert Baum Group. Based in Berlin, no less.

But the crown jewel of the evening, the piece de resistance, if you will, was the

unveiling of the stone. I have in my possession a paving stone from the streets of Warsaw. I am The Keeper of The Stone -- from one of the areas where the Uprising took place on Chlodna Street. It was entrusted to me by "friends " I have many friends, far too many in fact for a grumpy old loner like myself. Some of these friends you'd be honored and would dearly love to meet. Some you'd be well advised to never even think about meeting. Believe me, I pioneered the idea of "diversity".

I walked around the audience with this heavy stone. They each longed to touch it. They each caressed it lovingly. Tears welled up in their eyes, and a faraway look washed over them. The spark of long-lost family members ignited their dim and weakened vision. They thanked me profusely, but I had nothing more to say. I edged out into the twilight. It's not pretty to see a grown man cry. And my work was done.

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