

Jewish Journal

Palm Beach South

THE LARGEST JEWISH NEWSPAPER IN THE NATION

Wednesday, August 23, 2023

CENTENARIANS SHARE

Helen Wamstok Diker reflects on her Holocaust survival

By Linda Chase
Contributing Editor

Holocaust survivor Helen Wamstok Diker recently attended a birthday party hosted by Goodman Jewish Family Services in Broward County. The celebration, honoring Helen and five fellow centenarian survivors, was a testament to their resilience and strength. When I visited her Pembroke Pines home, Helen reflected on her survival and expressed the importance of family.

"I was born May 6, 1922 in Lodz, Poland. My father's name was Liv and my mother was Gitla. I had one brother and three sisters. My father was a shoemaker in Lodz, which was the center of the textile industry in prewar Poland. He struggled to make a living, however we were a close-knit, happy family. I attended a public school for Jewish girls and never experienced



Holocaust survivor Helen Diker. PHOTO BY LINDA CHASE

antisemitism as a child. Lodz was the second largest Jewish community in prewar Poland (Warsaw was the largest). When I was 17, life in Lodz took a horrific turn: German troops occupied the city on September 8, 1939. This was one week after Germany invaded

Poland on September 1. In February 1940, the Germans established a ghetto in Lodz, forcing my family along with 160,000 Jews into a small area. The Germans established factories in the ghetto and used Jewish residents for

Turn to Diker, Page 14

Holocaust survivor Chaim Greenberg encourages everyone to 'Enjoy Life'

By Linda Chase
Contributing Editor

Holocaust survivor Chaim Greenberg recently attended a centennial birthday bash hosted by Goodman Jewish Family Services. "I love to celebrate the gift of life" Chaim proclaimed when I visited him in his Hallandale Beach home.

"I was born December 20, 1922 in Warsaw, Poland. My father's name was Eli and my mother was Aliza, which literally means 'joy or happiness' in Hebrew. My father owned a home improvement/building supplies business. I was 16 when Germany invaded Poland and World War II began. I was able to flee Warsaw before the German army seized control of the city. Thousands of civilians perished during the siege. The city would remain occupied by the Nazis until January 17, 1945. After leav-



Holocaust survivor Chaim Greenberg. PHOTO BY LINDA CHASE

ing Warsaw, I served as a soldier and language interpreter in the British army. I speak multiple languages including German, Polish, Russian, Hebrew, Arabic and English, which greatly benefitted the allied forces. During my military service I traveled all over the world, eventually moving to Israel before the nation gained its independence. I worked as a taxi cab driver in Israel and

would later own a fleet of 12 cabs in New York. My wife and I raised our two sons in Queens before settling in South Florida."

Chaim shared his philosophy for life.

"I encourage people to enjoy life and not take anything too seriously. I'm passionate about sports and tango dancing. When I start dancing, it motivates everyone in the room to join in."

Blinds & SHADES
Commercial & Residential • Affordability & Elegance
A&D Custom Window Treatments
Hundreds of Colors
Styles • Designs

FREE \$25 min. order
To Spend Towards Purchase \$150

FREE MEASUREMENTS
FREE "SHOP AT HOME" SERVICE
Formally from the Big Apple Bazaar
(561) 674-3704

GASTROENTEROLOGY
Medical Specialists of the Palm Beaches

Moshe Eliezer Hirth MD, Leonard Flescher MD,
Steven Kirschner MD, Sherman Chamberlain MD,
Grigoriy Rapaport MD, Badar Muneer MD, Sherry Ellis MD

We welcome new patients & accept all major insurances
561-638-9533
Offices in Delray Beach, Boynton Beach & Boca Raton

Telehealth Available



“Every day is game day at Edgewater.”

MARK - Resident
Edgewater at Boca Pointe
Near Boca Pointe Country Club

After decades of hard work and planning, it's time to relax and spend your time doing what you love. Moving to an Acts Retirement-Life Community is the smart choice for your **QOL**. Come in and talk with one of our happy residents to learn how moving to **Edgewater at Boca Pointe** enabled them to focus on **Quality of Life**.

COMPREHENSIVE RETIREMENT
Your residence, amenities and more are all included with a one-time entrance fee and an ongoing monthly fee. And if you need more help in the future, your monthly fee will remain predictable thanks to Acts Life Care®.



Edgewater at Boca Pointe
Where Loving-Kindness Lives



LOCAL

Diker

from Page 1

forced labor. My work detail included sewing soldiers' uniforms. Hard labor, overcrowding and starvation were the dominant features of life in the ghetto. In 1944, the Germans deported my family and most of the surviving ghetto residents to Auschwitz-Birkenau. Once we disembarked from the trains, my mother and brother were sent to the line on the right and I never saw them again. My sisters and I were sent to the line on the left and our lives were spared. I spent 11 days in Auschwitz and was then transported to Stutthof along with two of my sisters. Stutthof was a concentration camp located in a wooded area near the Baltic port of Gdansk. One of my sisters and I hid in an attempt to stay together. Our only source of nourishment was soup and water. Conditions in the camp were brutal and many prisoners died from typhus epidemics that swept the camp. I was liberated by the British army in 1945 and was the only survivor from my family."

Helen reflected on her life after liberation.

"After the British liberated me, I was fed, given clothing and admitted to a hospital to recuperate. After the war I moved to Sweden.

New immigrants like myself were housed in schools that were converted into dormitories. Sweden offered a good life for Holocaust survivors. Swedes were broadly critical of Nazism and I can't recall any antisemitism. I met my husband (a survivor from Poland) in Sweden and we were married in 1947. My oldest of two sons was born there in 1948. After living in Sweden for a few years, we moved to New York in 1952 after my uncle sponsored our move. We settled in the Bronx and received \$500 from HIAS, the nonprofit organization that provides humanitarian aid and assistance for refugees. My husband and I both found employment in a coat factory. Our youngest son was born in 1955. I moved to South Florida 25 years ago for my husband's declining health. Our two sons became accountants. My oldest son was well respected in his community and when he passed away in 2020, 700 people attended his funeral. I have four grandchildren and four great grandchildren. My granddaughter, Tova, is a television writer and she recently won a Writers Guild Award for her work on 'Inside Amy Schumer.'"

Helen expressed her words of wisdom.

"I share my story to inspire, educate and create unity among all people."

**WE FIX BLINDS
 SHADES • SHUTTERS**
 REPAIRING • CLEANING • NEW SALES

CLEANING AND SALES
 All kinds of
 window treatments

"On-Site Repairs"

New Cord, New Chains, New
 Clips, New Hooks, New Parts,
 Replacement Slats, etc.

Draperies • Verticals • Venetians • Pleated Shades • Silhouettes
 Luminette • Plantation Shutters • Solar Screen Shades • Motorization

Any Type Blind Repair!

All Hunter Douglas Products • Fully Licensed and Insured

SHINE-A-BLIND INC.

561-739-9292 & 1-800-537-9948

Corporate Offices
 3300 S. Congress Ave. #9 • W.P.B./Boynton Beach

Serving Broward and Palm Beach
 Since 1980

