



Isaak and his wife, Sima

Isaak's Story of Survival

At the start of World War II, 18,000 Ukrainians – 14,000 of them Jews – called Tulchin, Ukraine home. When Isaak Govshiyevich returned there at war's end, only 14 years old at the time, about 5,000 people were left. Today, only 40-some Jews remain in the place in Western Ukraine where Isaak and his 11 siblings' childhoods came to an abrupt end in 1941.

Today 91, hair thinning, back aching, mobility a challenge, Isaak nonetheless speaks with an energetic lilt as he shares his harrowing story of World War II, conscription into the Red Army after 1945, his work as a hat maker and his eventual move across the planet to Portland, where **JFCS helped resettle him and his small family.** He and his wife, Sima, also from Ukraine and a Holocaust

Survivor, recently celebrated a quarter century in the Rose City.

Speaking in Russian with his granddaughter, Elena, translating, Isaak recounted that Romanian and German soldiers invaded his town on June 22, 1941. As the Red Army retreated, the Axis soldiers “burned a big store down and began robbing people.”

Then they began targeting the Jews, rounding them up and sending them first to a ghetto, then into a camp. *Mertvaya Petlya*, or Dead Loop in English, was converted from a mansion, where tuberculosis patients had been housed, into a concentration camp. Located a nearly 20-mile unforgiving walk from town, Isaak said, “Lots of people were killed along the way.”

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A message from our President

Dear Friends,

Welcome to JFCS' newsletter focused on our Holocaust Survivor Services (HSS) program. Here, you will read about:

- Isaak's story of survival, and how JFCS welcomed his family to Portland
- The Renée Holzman \$500,000 matching-challenge grant
- "Legacy," "Neglected Survivors" and upcoming events

As always, please be in touch with feedback, comments, ideas.

Warmly,



Larry Holzman, *Board President*



Our Legacy: HSS social events revived

JFCS clinicians recently facilitated an educational and social event for about 40 Holocaust Survivors in Congregation Shaarie Torah's social hall.

"Our Legacy: How Our Stories Create a New Narrative of Hope for the Future" featured a group conversation followed by a catered kosher lunch topped off with traditional Russian sweets like jam-filled pirozhki and a glass of white wine for all – as well as music performed by the three-member Hora Tzigane Klezmer Ensemble.

This was the first event of its kind since the March 2020 start of the pandemic that spelled isolation, particularly for this demographic. Attendees like Nikolay, 95, had a fantastic time.

"Being close to your loved ones. This is legacy," he said.



He recalls the slog, alongside his parents, siblings, nieces, nephews and other relatives – sometimes finding temporary respite in horse stables – to Dead Loop. Stuffed in “like sardines in a can,” Isaak said of the camp, people began dying of hunger, thirst and cold. Isaak said Typhus claimed his mother, and the *Politzei* killed two of his sisters. The Nazi-sympathizing law enforcement officers also shoved many victims to their death in the nearby river.

“I knew lots of people [who died] but I can’t remember their names because I was young,” Isaak said of his 10-year-old self. **All told, he spent nearly two years in the ghetto and two years in the camp.** In March 1944, the Red Army liberated Isaak, Sima, and the rest of the Survivors. He lost seven of his siblings. Back in the greatly diminished town of his birth, Isaak completed high school before being conscripted into the Red Army; he served in Siberia until Josef Stalin’s death in 1953.

“My life was pretty hard,” said Isaak, recalling that in Soviet Russia, no one could talk about the war, the tragedies they faced, the loves they lost.

An adult, Isaak joined his family’s clandestine business fashioning *ushankas*, the traditional Russian mink hats with ear flaps. Until, that is, Russian Jews began



Isaak and Sima in Tulchin in the late 1970s

leaving the Soviet Union *en masse*, his brother included, who in 1988 resettled his family in Portland. Soon, Isaak and Sima yearned to reunite with family, the scars of so many lost in the war still very fresh.

With then-19-year-old granddaughter Elena in tow, Isaak and Sima arrived in Portland on Jan. 7, 1998. Jewish Family & Child Service already had been alerted to their arrival and had prepared an apartment for them in which to begin their new lives. “It was pretty nice to actually open the door and see it furnished,” said Elena, now a nurse and with an adult daughter of her own.

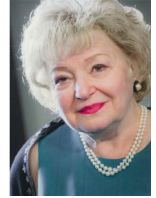
“I remember there was furniture, kitchen utensils, all provided,” Isaak said. “My brother explained it was because of JFCS.”

JFCS has been there, providing dentures, a stair lift to their second-story apartment once Sima’s mobility suffered, cooking services, meal deliveries and more.

“I appreciate the things all the services provide,” Isaak said.

Renée Holzman Challenge Grant for Holocaust Survivors

"I was thinking about whether one can ever right the wrongs of history. Clearly, in the 1930s, when we could have saved many of the Jews of Europe, the world chose to close its gates, thereby condemning them to the fate that is called the Holocaust.



We cannot today undo that cruel decision, but we can act on behalf of the Survivors of that terrible time and who live amongst us. We cannot rewrite the history of the time when people chose to harden their hearts and look the other way.

What we can do today is open our hearts to the needs of the Survivors. When the history of our era is written, let it be said that we chose the right path." - Renée Holzman

Oregon's only Holocaust Survivor Services program is at a critical juncture: Clients, who have faced and survived the unimaginable, are aging, and thus require more services at greater cost. Renée Holzman has been contemplating this reality, the significant role she can play and that of community members as we all collectively work to ensure Holocaust Survivors' wishes are met: to age with dignity and in place.

Renée is providing a generous, game-changing \$500,000 matching-challenge grant. JFCS asks that you, too, consider Renée's reflections on Survivors and join her in standing with Survivors by helping to meet her challenge by June 30, 2023.

You can help support Portland's Holocaust Survivors

*In their lifetime they have seen great persecution and misery.
Help us make their last years comfortable.*

60%

**AT OR BELOW
POVERTY LINE**

85

**AVERAGE
AGE**

80%

**FROM UKRAINE OR
ANOTHER FSU COUNTRY**

To learn more, visit

www.jfcs-portland.org/services/holocaust-survivor-services

Visit www.jfcs-portland.org to make a donation

Caring for Survivors means providing their personal care and also the work professionals around them must do to ensure and support such care.

Here is the impact your gift makes:

\$7,500 Supports a Survivor for one year

The average total cost to care for a Survivor for one year is \$28,000. The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) covers only 65% of the total cost. After the Federation of Greater Portland's allocation, JFCS is responsible for the unfunded mandate of \$7,500 per year, per client. That remainder must come from our community via fundraising.

60 of Portland's 100 Survivors qualify for aging in place support services through the Claims Conference. We need your help to take care of our community's Holocaust Survivors and fund the following services:

\$4,125

Covers Case Management

Every day, bilingual case managers address the personal and home-care needs of our Survivors. They also research, analyze and complete reports that are required by the Claims Conference oversight process in order to maintain client funding.

\$1,875

Pays for Personal Care & Housekeeping

Successful aging in place requires weekly, and often daily, assistance with bathing, feeding and hygiene, as well as cooking, cleaning and errands.

\$1,000

Supplies Direct Aid

Utilities, medical and dental bills, hearing aids, home-safety modification, air conditioners and more are provided by donors' gifts. These gifts often are supplemented or matched by our foundation partner, Kavod SHEF.

 KAVOD
SHEF
Foundation for Jewish Family & Child Service

\$500

Funds a Café Europa event

Virtual gatherings and a reboot of in-person support are critical for the physical and emotional well-being of our Survivors.



Social services for Nazi victims have been supported by a grant from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany

The Neglected Survivors: A Lecture



Prof. Natan Meir explores the Holocaust experienced by Soviet Jews, their emotional suppression following WWII, postwar Soviet repression and antisemitism and the escape of many to Israel and the United States.

Free and open to the public, the lecture, “The Neglected Survivors,” attracted 150 people in-person and via the livestream. Thanks to a generous Women’s Giving Circle grant, ASL interpreters and live-captioning in Russian and in English ensured an accessible event. JFCS is so grateful to co-sponsors Congregation Beth Israel, OJMCHE, and Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

Watch a recording of the lecture at:
www.jfcs-portland.org/hss-lecture

SAVE THE DATE



JFCS
Jewish Family & Child Service

CELEBRATING GENERATIONS

Thursday, May 18, 2023

6:30 pm at Castaway



Celebrating 75 years of JFCS!

Featuring a musical performance by

China Forbes of Pink Martini

For details and sponsorship opportunities, visit
www.jfcs-portland.org/celebrating-generations

75
YEARS

Stability & Hope
Then. Now. Always.

JFCS' ONGOING SUPPORT GROUPS

Community Connection

Open to all and moderated by JFCS' clinical director, this group meets online many Fridays at 10 a.m. It is a space for anyone in the community to connect with others and share what's on their mind. The schedule is available at jfcs-portland.org.

Grief Connection

This is a group for sharing experiences with grief, connecting with others and learning strategies of moving through loss. It meets online the first Friday of every month at 10 a.m. For more information, visit jfcs-portland.org/grief-connection.

Cancer Support Group

Created to support anyone with a cancer diagnosis, this group meets on Zoom the second Wednesday of every month at 11 a.m.

Disability Mental Health Spotlight

Join our Counseling and Disability Support Services programs for an ongoing series of mental health groups for members of the disabled community.

For JFCS' entire support group calendar, visit
www.jfcs-portland.org/services/counseling/calendar

Volunteer for JFCS

Volunteering is an integral part of supporting JFCS. Our volunteers reach every corner of the community, and, thus, the hearts of our clients. We are so grateful to those who give JFCS their time and energy. This is all part of JFCS' commitment to the values of *tikkun olam*, repairing the world, and *tzedakah*, selfless giving. To learn more about how you can help, visit our Volunteer page on www.jfcs-portland.org.



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