JEWISH GENEALOGY SOCIETY OF MARYLAND

Meeting of November 22, 2015

1:30 – 3:00 pm

Hadassah of Greater Baltimore

3723 Old Court Road, #205

Pikesville, MD 21208

MINUTES

President Lara Diamond opened the meeting at 1:30 pm. Three new attendees were present and one, in light of today’s presentation, noted that she had been born in China. Treasurer Fred Handelman reported that, after current dues receipts and expenses during the most recent period our bank account had a balance of $3,957.

Lara noted that she will be part of reciprocal programs between the Jewish Genealogy Society of Greater Philadelphia and JGSMD. Mark Halpern will be visiting from Philadelphia for his presentation to our group on December 27. Lara will be in Philadelphia a week earlier to give her talk on tracing her Ukrainian roots.

Today’s speaker is our member Rena Rotenberg. Her talk, “My Husband's Story: A Jewish Child Growing Up in Tientsin, China, 1939–1948”, is based upon the finding of many letters, photographs and other documents belonging to her late husband, Wolfgang, after his death.

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| ***Rena Rotenberg, a member of the Jewish Genealogy Society of Maryland, is a Jewish early childhood educator. She has taught at Baltimore Hebrew College, Stevenson University, BCCC and CCBC. As a childbirth educator she started the program now known as “Shalom Baby.”*** | My Husband's Story: A Jewish Child Growing Up in Tientsin, China, 1939–1948.”  Wolfgang Rotenberg was born in Jauer, Germany. In 1939, when he was 8 years old, his family fled to China to escape Nazi persecution. Young Wolfgang’s father had worked as a cantor and *schochet* for the Jewish community in Kalisch, Germany. When it was clear that they had to leave Kalisch, they were helped by the Jewish Community of Berlin. Why the family of four would be heading to China was not clear, other than it had served as a refuge for other Jews. An initial letter to the Far Eastern Jewish Information Bureau in Harbin, China resulted in the reply that “we don’t have anything, but try Shanghai.”  The family sailed for Shanghai on the Lloyd Triestino line. The cantor’s piano traveled separately from Germany to Genoa, then aboard an Italian luxury liner, sailing through to the Suez Canal and on to Shanghai. The Rotenbergs’ stay in Shanghai was brief. They settled in the port city of Tientsin, where the cantor and *schochet* continued in those capacities for the local community. Wolfgang was enrolled in the Tientsin Jewish Day School where he studied a wide range of subjects. Languages he studied included English, Russian, Japanese and German.  After 1945, when the war was over, the Jewish people began to want to leave China. The Rotenberg family lived in Tientsin, China until 1948, when they flew via Hawaii to their ultimate destination of Baltimore. |

During the course of her talk, Rena allowed to be passed around some of the many letters, photographs, school records and other documents that she had found in her late husband’s collection. These artifacts elicited many questions from a very engaged audience.

**Next Meeting**

The next program will take place on December 27 at 1:30PM at the Baltimore Hadassah office. Our featured speaker will be our visitor from Philadelphia, Mark Halpern, who will discuss the genealogical records available for tracing one’s Polish and Galician roots.

[Later developments required that our meeting location be changed to the Park Heights JCC, New Board Room.]

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